1. **Purpose**

1.1 To establish a single, robust and comprehensive policy on how English language competence is assessed for entry to undergraduate and postgraduate study at the University of Edinburgh.

1.2 By standardising the accepted evidence of English language competence, the policy aims to create a fair and transparent system for all students.

1.3 The policy sets out how the University ensures compliance with the UK Immigration Rules. Tier 4 is the main immigration route for students applying outside of the EEA to come to the UK to study in higher education, and is overseen by the UK Home Office. The University of Edinburgh is a Tier 4 Highly Trusted Sponsor.

1.4 The policy outlines:

   a. the procedure by which additional methods of assessment of English language may be approved for entry purposes

   b. the evidential documentation required to be retained on record as proof that an assessment of English language skills has been carried out for each sponsored Tier 4 student in the event of a Home Office Audit. In doing so, the policy will ensure that evidence used as proof of English language for Tier 4 students is in accordance with the Immigration Rules.

2. **Scope**

2.1 This policy applies University-wide and to all undergraduate and postgraduate applicants, including visiting student applicants.

2.2 The policy relates to methods of assessment for admissions purposes.

3. **General principles**

3.1 The University requires all students to demonstrate sufficient English language competence to undertake and derive full benefit from their chosen programme of study.

3.2 Students who are non-native English speakers must meet the English language requirements of their intended programme of study.

3.3 All Tier 4 applicants must meet Home Office Tier 4 requirements, in order for the University to sponsor them.

4. **English language requirements for admissions purposes**

4.1 All applicants to the University will be asked to demonstrate a level of English study, irrespective of their nationality or country of residence.
4.2 All undergraduate applicants must meet the University’s general requirement for English language:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/entry-requirements/english

4.3 Undergraduate applicants who are non-native speakers of English, must demonstrate English language proficiency in all four language competencies. The University accepts a number of qualifications and tests as evidence of meeting this requirement:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/entry-requirements/english

4.4 Postgraduate applicants who are native speakers of English will be deemed to meet the University’s requirements for English language competency on the basis of their degree which has been taught and assessed in English.

4.5 Postgraduate applicants who are non-native speakers of English, must demonstrate English language proficiency in all four language competencies. The University accepts a number of English language qualifications and tests as evidence of meeting this requirement for admissions purposes:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate

4.6 The test score or qualification must confirm that the applicant has achieved the requisite level of English in one single certificate and in all four language components (reading, writing, speaking and listening), unless the applicant is exempt from sitting a component by a test provider on the grounds of a disability. Aggregated highest scores across more than one test certificate do not meet this requirement.

4.7 The minimum grade or score required in an approved test or qualification will be determined by the admitting College, and may vary by programme, according to the level of English competence required. In all cases this will be at or above the level required for Tier 4 purposes.

4.8 The University accepts previous undergraduate and postgraduate degree-level study which has been taught and assessed in English in a Majority English Speaking Country for admissions purposes, provided the award date is no more than two years and six months prior to the start date of the programme to be studied. Applicants whose qualification is older than two years and six months will be considered on a case by case basis. Acceptance will be based on the applicant having lived continuously and worked or undertaken further study in a Majority English Speaking Country since the award of the qualification used for entry.

4.9 The University accepts undergraduate and postgraduate degree-level study awarded by some universities in non-Majority English Speaking Countries where teaching and assessment are conducted in English. Where an undergraduate student has transferred from a university where teaching and assessment are conducted in a language other than English, to a university in a non-Majority English Speaking Country where teaching and assessment are conducted in English, to complete their studies, at least fifty percent of the studies undertaken must be in English, including the final year of study.

4.10 Some programmes may accept satisfactory completion of a University of Edinburgh pre-sessional or English for Academic Purposes programme immediately prior to the proposed start date of their degree programme. Further information is available on request from the relevant University admissions office.

4.11 Where applicants have completed a relevant University of Edinburgh Pre-sessional English Language or English for Academic Purposes programme, they must demonstrate evidence of achieving the minimum required entry level in:

i) the English language test set by the English Language Teaching Centre and
ii) Writing Assessment
iii) Speaking Assessment


4.12 The following do not meet the University’s English language requirements, because they do not constitute a formal assessment of English language competence:

- General work experience in an English language environment
- References/general statements confirming the applicant speaks English
- Formal/Informal Interview

5. **English language Tier 4 visa requirements**

5.1 The Immigration Rules require sponsors to ensure that all Tier 4 visa applicants are able to demonstrate a sufficient standard of English. The following paragraphs explain how the University ensures compliance with the Immigration Rules.

5.2 For degree-level study, English language capability must be at least equivalent to level B2 of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning (CEFR) in all four components of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

5.3 CEFR B2 is nominally below all English language level requirements for entry to degree level study at the University of Edinburgh.

5.4 For sub-degree level study, English language capability must be at least equivalent to level B1 of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework for Language Learning in all four components for a student to be sponsored as a Tier 4 General Student migrant and must be evidenced in a Secure English Language Test.

5.5 For the purposes of Tier 4 requirements, the University will accept some secure English Language Tests (SELT) from the Home Office list of approved tests.

5.6 In addition to some tests on the Home Office list of approved tests, the University accepts ETC TOEFL iBT as meeting Tier 4 requirements under our own methods of assessment, permissible through being a Highly Trusted Sponsor and a Higher Education Institution.

5.7 All qualifications and tests accepted for Tier 4 and University admissions purposes are listed on the University website:

- Undergraduate: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/entry-requirements/english](http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/entry-requirements/english)
- Postgraduate: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate](http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate)

5.8 Some English language tests expire after a specified period of time has elapsed. All tests must be valid according to the UK Home Office at the start of the degree programme. Details of validity can be found on the Home Office website:

[http://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa](http://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa)

5.9 Nationality of a country on the list of majority English speaking countries would be deemed acceptable in meeting the Home Office’s requirements for Tier 4. “Nationality” is defined as being a passport holder from one of these countries:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
5.10 Completion of an academic qualification at least equivalent to a UK Bachelor’s degree in one of the following majority English speaking countries would be deemed acceptable in meeting the Home Office’s requirements for Tier 4:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Ireland
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

5.11 Record keeping

Evidence of English language qualifications must be retained in the applicant’s EUCLID record. This could include, for example, IELTS other SELT certificates, degree certificates from institutions in Home Office designated English majority nations or scans of a passport photo page confirming nationality. For Tier 4 purposes, all records must be retained for 12 months following graduation.

6. Policy review and revision

6.1 The University’s Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group approves methods of assessment of English language for University entry purposes, and may constitute a subgroup to consider and make recommendations regarding the acceptability of new methods of assessment.

6.2 The following criteria will be applied when considering the acceptability of methods of assessment of English language competence:

- Does the method of assessment provide evidence of competence in all four components? (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
- Is the method sufficiently secure and robust?
- Is there sufficient compelling evidence that students meeting the University’s English language requirements via the method of assessment will be able to undertake and derive full benefit from their studies?

6.3 In all cases of consideration of acceptability of new methods of assessment, advice will be sought from the University’s English Language Teaching Centre.
6.4 The minimum grade or score in an approved qualification required for entry to a specific programme will be determined by the admitting College. In all cases this will be at or above the level required for Tier 4 purposes.

6.5 Lists of qualifications and tests accepted for undergraduate and postgraduate entry purposes will be published on the University website and maintained by Student Recruitment & Admissions, on the basis of decisions made by the Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group.

6.6 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group and revised in light of changes in legislation and University regulations and strategic objectives.

Revised March 2016
Approved by Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group June 2016