The University of Edinburgh

Policy regarding English language entry requirements

1. **Purpose**
   1.1 All applicants to the University will be asked to demonstrate a level of English language competence, irrespective of their nationality or country of residence.

   1.2 This policy establishes a single, comprehensive position on how English language competence is assessed for entry to undergraduate and postgraduate study at the University of Edinburgh, to ensure a fair and transparent approach for all applicants.

   1.2 The policy distinguishes between the assessment of English for admissions purposes, and to comply with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Tier 4 regulations.

2. **Scope**
   2.1 This policy applies University-wide and to all applicants; undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, visiting students, and online learning.

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 UKVI apply the visa regulations that the University must adhere to in order to retain our Tier 4 sponsor licence, and applicants who require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK must meet UKVI English language requirements for the University to sponsor them.

   3.3 University of Edinburgh English language entry requirements exceed Tier 4 visa requirements. Any margin of flexibility in University English language requirements for admissions purposes needs to remain above the UKVI requirement.

   3.4 The English language qualifications and tests approved for entry have been assessed as meeting the standards in all four language competencies required by applicants who are not nationals of a majority English speaking country, as defined by UKVI, even if the qualifications do not explicitly provide an assessment outcome for each competency.

4. **Undergraduate applicants**
   4.1 All undergraduate applicants must meet the University’s requirement for English language competence through an accepted English qualification.
4.2 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. The English language requirement for the most commonly presented qualifications is included in the entry requirements section for each undergraduate degree programme in the online Degree Finder.

4.3 Tier 4 requirements for undergraduate applicants

4.4 Undergraduate applicants who require a Tier 4 visa must have an English qualification that is at an equivalent level to at least B2 on the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR), unless they are a national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UKVI (see Appendix 1).

4.5 The English qualifications that the University accepts from undergraduate applicants requiring a Tier 4 visa are listed on the English Language entry requirements page on the University website: https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/ug-english

4.6 Some English language tests (notably IELTS and Trinity ISE at the time of writing) expire after two years. Where an applicant holds an English language test with a two year expiry, the award date must be no more than two years from the start date of the programme. In cases where the award date is older, applicants must be asked to take a new test, or to provide one of the other English qualifications the University accepts.

4.7 All other English language qualifications that the University accepts and that do not expire after a set period, must be no more than three and a half years old from the start date of the programme.

4.8 The University accepts satisfactory completion of its International Foundation Programme as meeting English language requirements.

4.8 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

4.9 Any request for flexibility to these arrangements must be made using the process set out in Section 9 below.

5. Postgraduate applicants

5.1 All postgraduate taught and postgraduate research applicants, whether they are studying on campus or online, must meet the University’s requirement for English language competence.

5.2 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. The English language requirement for the most commonly presented qualifications is included in the entry requirements section for each postgraduate degree programme in the online Degree Finder.

5.3 Postgraduate applicants who are nationals of a majority English speaking country as defined by the UKVI, including the UK, will be deemed to meet the University’s requirements for
English language competency on the basis of their previous undergraduate or postgraduate study which has been taught and assessed in English.

5.4 **Tier 4 requirements for postgraduate applicants**

5.5 Postgraduate applicants who require a Tier 4 visa must have an English qualification that is at an equivalent level to at least B2 on the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR), unless they are a national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UKVI (see Appendix 1).

5.6 The English qualifications that the University accepts from postgraduate applicants requiring a Tier 4 visa are listed on the English Language entry requirements page on the University website: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate](http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate)

5.7 The University accepts previous undergraduate or postgraduate degree-level study, including one year Masters programmes, which have been taught and assessed in English in a majority English speaking country, provided the award date is no more than three years prior to the start date of the programme. Applicants whose qualification is older than three years will be considered on a case by case basis. The process for further consideration is set out in Section 9.

5.8 The University accepts undergraduate or postgraduate degree-level study, including one year Masters programmes, awarded by some universities in non-majority English speaking countries where teaching and assessment are conducted in English, provided the award date is no more than three years prior to the start date of the programme. Accepted degrees must have been assessed by the University’s Admissions Qualification Subgroup (AQS) and approved by the Student Recruitment Strategy Group (SRSG) in accordance with the process set out in Section 10. A list of approved universities is published online: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate](http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/english/postgraduate)

5.9 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 Majority English Speaking Country or to an approved university in a non-Majority English Speaking Country to complete their studies, at least fifty percent of the studies undertaken must be in English, including the final year of study, for this to be accepted as meeting the University’s English language requirement.

5.10 The University does not accept undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications awarded by UK universities where all study has taken place at an overseas campus in a non-majority English speaking country, unless the degrees have been assessed and approved in accordance with the process set out in Section 10.

5.11 The University accepts undergraduate or postgraduate degree-level qualifications jointly awarded by the University of Edinburgh with partner universities in non-Majority English Speaking Countries where teaching and assessment are conducted in English, even if the partner universities are not on the list of approved universities.

5.12 The University accepts satisfactory completion of its pre-sessional or English for Academic Purposes programme immediately prior to the proposed start date of a postgraduate degree programme.
6. Visiting student applicants

6.1 Visiting students who are not nationals of a majority English speaking country must meet the University’s requirement for English language competence.

6.2 Information on English language requirements for visiting exchange students is published online: http://www.ed.ac.uk/global/study-abroad/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements

6.3 Visiting research students who will attend the University of Edinburgh for no more than 12 weeks and who will not be enrolled on a credit-bearing course do not require a Tier 4 visa and are not required to meet University English language requirements set out in this policy. Academic Schools will assess English language competency for these students to meet any health and safety requirements, and to ensure that the students are able to fully engage with their Edinburgh experience.

7. University of Edinburgh English language test

7.1 The University of Edinburgh, English Language Education (ELE), has developed an English language test which has been piloted for the assessment of the English language competency of online learning applicants to the School of Law.

7.2 The Student Recruitment Strategy Group has approved the test for continued assessment of online learning applicants to the School of Law, and has extended it for assessment of online learning applicants to the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

7.3 The test has been determined to be robust and secure, and at the required level to comply with Tier 4 regulations. As such, the test is also approved for applicants to on-campus programmes via the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme, and for applicants from countries disrupted by local emergencies. A list of relevant countries is available from the Head of Admissions in Student Recruitment and Admissions.

8. Record keeping for applicants requiring a Tier 4 visa

8.1 Evidence of English language qualifications must be retained in the applicant’s EUCLID record. This includes, for example, copies of English language test or qualification certificates, degree certificates from institutions in Home Office designated majority English speaking countries, or scans of a passport photo page confirming nationality. In all cases, admissions staff should use the notes section on the EUCLID application record, to clearly state the evidence obtained. All records must be retained for 12 months following graduation.

9. Process for the consideration of flexibility

9.1 Applicants are expected to meet the English language requirements set out in this policy. However, the University recognises that there may be occasions where an individual’s circumstances justifies the consideration of additional information. For example, where an applicant’s previous degree meets the requirements of the policy but was achieved more than three years before the start date of the programme applied for, evidence that the applicant has lived continuously and worked or undertaken further study in a Majority English Speaking Country since the award of the qualification may be taken into account in determining whether the applicant meets the appropriate academic standards.
9.2 Each College must have a process by which any case for the consideration of flexibility can be raised by either academic or admissions staff, to a delegated (named) person within the College. Colleges may delegate responsibility for managing this process to individual Schools where admissions operations are carried out within Schools. However, the process of delegation must be a formal one overseen by the main College Admissions Office.

9.3 Where a case is raised within a College or School and the delegated person in the College believes additional consideration should be given, the following process should be followed.

9.4 Details of the applicant’s circumstances, and any supporting evidence should be provided by the delegated person to the Head of Admissions in Student Recruitment & Admissions.

9.5 The Head of Admissions will assess the evidence provided and will decide whether flexibility can be recommended. Approval for flexibility can only be granted by the convenor of the Student Recruitment Strategy Group.

10. Process for the assessment of qualifications for entry

10.1 The University’s Admissions Qualifications Subgroup (AQS), reporting to the Student Recruitment Strategy Group (SRSG), carries out due diligence on all qualifications prior to their acceptance for University entry purposes.

10.2 The following criteria will be applied when considering the acceptability of new qualifications:
   - Does the curriculum and/or method of assessment provide evidence of competence in all four components, (reading, writing, speaking, listening)?
   - Is the method of assessment 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?

10.3 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.

10.4 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 AQS and SRSG.

10.5 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 and approved by the Student Recruitment Strategy Group, October 2017

First approved by Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group, June 2016
Appendix 1.

UKVI English language Tier 4 visa requirements

1. The Immigration Rules stipulated by the Home Office UKVI, require sponsors to ensure that all Tier 4 visa applicants are able to demonstrate a sufficient standard of English.

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

3. For sub-degree level study, English language capability must be at least equivalent to level B1 of the CEFR in all four components for a student to be sponsored as a Tier 4 General Student migrant. This must be evidenced via a Secure English Language Test (SELT) as defined by the UKVI.

4. In addition to tests on the Home Office list of approved SELTs, the University, through being a Highly Trusted Sponsor and a Higher Education Institution, is permitted to use our own methods of assessment for establishing the suitability of English language qualifications for entry.

5. 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

6. If an applicant is a national of a country on the list of majority English speaking countries, they 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
   - St Kitts and Nevis
   - St Lucia
   - St Vincent and the Grenadines
   - Trinidad and Tobago
   - United Kingdom
   - United States of America

7. 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