



Recruitment and admissions

Policy No.	SRA-009	Version:	6.4
.Title	University of Edinburgh policy regarding English language entry requirements		
Description	A comprehensive position on how English language competence is assessed for entry to undergraduate and postgraduate study.		
Dates			
First approved:	01/05/2014	Last approved:	28/11/2023
		Active from:	12/12/2023
		Equality impact assessment:	2014
Last reviewed:	05/02/2024	Last amended:	05/02/2024
		Next review:	01/08/2024
UK quality code:	Core practices: The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.		Legal/regulatory-driven
			Yes
Purpose			
All applicants are asked to demonstrate English language competency, irrespective of nationality or country of residence. To ensure fairness and transparency, this policy establishes a single position on how competency is assessed for entry to study. The policy distinguishes between English assessment for admissions purposes and compliance with UK Visas and immigration regulations.			
Scope			Mandatory
This policy applies University-wide and to all applicants; undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, online learning, and visiting students, except for visiting postgraduate research students who will be at the University for less than 12 weeks.			
Consultation carried out			
College admissions teams; SRA stakeholders; Admissions Qualifications Subgroup			
Responsibilities			
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Approving body:	Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group		
Related policies:	University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy; UK Government Tier 4 visa requirements; UK Government Student Route visa requirements		
Policies superseded:	None		
Keywords:	Admissions; English; Language; Competency; VISA; immigration		



University of Edinburgh policy regarding English language entry requirements

1. Purpose

- 1.1. All applicants to the University are asked to demonstrate a level of English language competency, 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 fairness and transparency for all applicants.
- 1.3. The policy distinguishes between the assessment of English for admissions purposes and compliance with UKVI visa regulations.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies University-wide and to all applicants; undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, online learning, and visiting students, except for visiting postgraduate research students who will be at the University for less than 12 weeks.

3. Abbreviations

- 3.1. **AQG:** Admissions Qualifications Group
- 3.2. **CEFR:** Common European Framework for Reference
- 3.3. **ELE:** University of Edinburgh English Language Education
- 3.4. **EUCLID:** Edinburgh University application database
- 3.5. **HESA:** Higher Education Statistics Agency
- 3.6. **IELTS:** International English Language Testing System
- 3.7. **ISE:** Integrated Skills in English
- 3.8. **MESC:** Majority English Speaking Country
- 3.9. **PGCE/PGDE:** Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Education
- 3.10. **SELT:** Secure English Language Test
- 3.11. **SFC:** Scottish Funding Council
- 3.12. **SRA:** Student Recruitment and Admissions
- 3.13. **SRFSG:** Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group
- 3.14. **TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language

3.15. UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

3.16. UKVI: United Kingdom Visas and Immigration

4. Definitions

4.1. English language competency: The level of English language proficiency and skill required to successfully engage in academic activities conducted in English at the university level. This competency is often evaluated through standardized tests (such as TOEFL and IELTS) or other assessments to ensure that non-native English speakers have the necessary language skills in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding of academic English to succeed in their studies.

5. Background

- 5.1.** The University has a responsibility to ensure that all students have a sufficient level of English language competence to undertake and derive full benefit from their chosen programme of study, and to contribute to a positive learning environment for all.
- 5.2.** Applicants from a non-majority English-speaking country who require a student visa to study in the UK must also meet [UKVI English language requirements](#) for the University to sponsor them for a visa.
- 5.3.** 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 degree programme in the online [Degree Finder](#).

6. Accepted qualifications

6.1. The [English language qualifications](#) that the University accepts which meet both English language competence and student visa requirements are listed on the University website.

These qualifications have been assessed through the University's AQS 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.

6.2. The University may also accept English qualifications to meet its undergraduate English language competence requirements which have not been approved by AQS as meeting student visa English language requirements, for example, the US High School Diploma. These qualifications are detailed on the [country pages](#) of the University website.

An applicant who is not a national of a majority English-speaking country and who requires a student visa would require an English language qualification from the list outlined in 6.1 at the appropriate level, in addition to a qualification in this category.

- 6.3.** Award dates for IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson Test of English and Trinity ISE English language tests must be no more than two years from the first day of the month in which the programme begins. This is indicated on the [English language entry requirements](#) pages on the University website.

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 first day of the month in which the programme begins. In cases where the award date is older, applicants will be asked to take a new test or to provide one of the other English qualifications the University accepts.

- 6.4.** Other than the qualifications listed in 6.3 above, qualifications used to meet undergraduate English language requirements by applicants who are not nationals of a majority English-speaking country must be no more than three and a half years old by the first day of the month in which the programme begins.
- 6.5.** Where a degree is used to meet postgraduate English language requirements by applicants who are not nationals of a majority English-speaking country, this must be no more than five years old by the first day of the month in which the programme begins.

7. Qualifications for undergraduate applicants only

- 7.1.** The University accepts completion of all Foundation English for Academic Purposes modules taken as part of its International Foundation Programme at specified grades to meet English language requirements for undergraduate degree programmes.
- 7.2.** Applicants from Singapore who have met the English language entry requirements through an accepted qualification but who have undertaken military service in Singapore after leaving school can be accepted based on accepted school qualifications up to three and a half years from the time they left school, rather than from the date when they achieved the qualification.
- 7.3.** Applicants from other countries who are required to undertake compulsory military service before starting an undergraduate degree will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8. Qualifications for postgraduate and graduate-entry applicants only

- 8.1.** The University accepts previous undergraduate or postgraduate degree-level study, including one-year Masters programmes and PGCE/PGDE teaching qualifications, which have been taught and assessed in English in a majority English-speaking country. Applicants who are not nationals of a majority English-speaking country and whose qualification is more than five years old will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The process for further consideration is set out in Section 15.
- 8.2.** 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. Accepted degrees must be awarded by universities that have been assessed by the University's AQS following the process set out in Section 16. See the [list of approved universities](#).

- 8.3.** 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 overseas campus has been assessed and approved following the process set out in Section 16.
- 8.4.** The University does not accept degrees taught and assessed entirely online as evidence of English language proficiency, except for online degrees awarded by the University of Edinburgh. Degrees awarded by the Open University can be accepted from applicants who are nationals of a majority English-speaking country only.
- 8.5.** 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.
- 8.6.** The University accepts dual/joint award qualifications awarded by a UK university with a partner university in China, where the degree is licenced by the Chinese Ministry of Education and is included on the Ministry's [published list of approved joint degrees](#). A translation of this list will be published on the University's website and updated on an annual basis.
- 8.7.** The University may consider dual/joint award qualifications awarded by a UK university with a partner university in a non-majority English-speaking country on a case-by-case basis, through the University's due diligence process. Any degrees approved through this process will be published on the University's website.
- 8.8.** Degree transfers – if a student transfers to a university in a majority English-speaking country or to an approved university in a non-majority English-speaking country to complete their degree, this can be used to meet our English language requirements providing:
- The degree studies in the majority English-speaking country or at the approved university have been taught and assessed in English;
 - The time spent studying in the majority English-speaking country or at the approved university makes up at least 50% of the duration of the degree; and
 - The student has spent at least one year at the approved university following the transfer, which must include the final year of their degree.
- 8.9.** Where an applicant for a postgraduate programme has met the University of Edinburgh's entry requirement for undergraduate study, and subsequently completed a degree taught and assessed in English at a recognised university in a non-majority English-speaking country that has not been approved for English language purposes, this can be accepted for entry subject to the following conditions:
- The applicant can provide evidence that they began the relevant degree within 3.5 years of achieving an accepted school qualification that meets the University of Edinburgh undergraduate [English language entry requirements](#); and

- The applicant can provide evidence that their degree was taught and assessed in English, in the form of a letter from the awarding institution; and
 - The degree was successfully achieved within five years of the first day of the month in which the programme at the University of Edinburgh begins.
- 8.10.** Professional registration and English language qualifications for professional purposes may also be approved for entry providing they constitute a formal assessment of English language competence to the required standards, and they have been approved by the Admissions Qualifications Group following the arrangements set out in Section 16. Any professional qualifications approved for entry will be published on the University website.
- 8.11.** The University accepts satisfactory completion of its pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes programmes before the start date of a postgraduate degree programme. Pre-sessional English programmes delivered by other universities can be accepted on the same basis, providing they have been assessed and approved by AQS. Any approved pre-sessional English programmes will be listed on the University website. Pre-sessional English programmes will have an expiry period of two years from the date awarded.

9. Evidence which cannot be accepted

- 9.1.** 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

10. Student Visa requirements

- 10.1.** Applicants who require a student visa must have an English qualification that is at an equivalent level to at least B2 on the [CEFR](#) unless they are a national of a majority English-speaking country as defined by UKVI (see Appendix 1).
- 10.2.** The English language qualifications and tests approved by the University of Edinburgh to meet student visa [English language requirements](#) are detailed on the University website.
- 10.3.** The English language competency requirements exceed student visa requirements. Any margin of flexibility in University English language requirements for admissions purposes will remain above the UKVI requirement.

11. Students transferring to the University of Edinburgh

- 11.1.** Students who transfer to the University of Edinburgh through a formal partnership arrangement and who have been taught and assessed in English for at least one year at the partner university will be considered to have met the University's requirement for English language competence.

- 11.2. Students who transfer to the University of Edinburgh from a university in a majority English-speaking country, or from a university which has been approved through the University of Edinburgh's due diligence process, will be considered to have met the University's requirement for English language competence based on a minimum of one year's successful study in English at their previous institution. This includes students on 2+2 degrees.
- 11.3. Students who transfer to the University of Edinburgh from a university in a non-majority English-speaking country which has not been approved through the University of Edinburgh's diligence process will be required to provide an acceptable English language qualification to demonstrate that they meet the University's requirement for English language competence.

12. Visiting student applicants

- 12.1. Visiting undergraduate students must meet the English language competence requirements.
- 12.2. Visiting postgraduate students must meet the published English language competence requirements for their degree programme.
- 12.3. Visiting students who require a student visa must have an English qualification that is at an equivalent level to at least B2 on the [CEFR](#) unless they are a national of a majority English-speaking country as defined by UKVI (see Appendix 1).
- 12.4. Visiting students from a university in a majority English-speaking country, or from a university which has been approved through the University of Edinburgh's due diligence process, will be considered to have met the University's requirement for English language competence based on a minimum of one year's successful study in English at their previous institution.

13. University of Edinburgh English language test

- 13.1. University of Edinburgh ELE has developed an English language test which has been assessed as robust and secure, and at the required level to comply with student visa regulations. ELE can therefore provide English language testing for students who are unable to access an English language test locally for exceptional reasons. These include applicants for the [Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme](#), applicants with refugee or asylum seeker status, and applicants from countries disrupted by local emergencies. Staff should contact the Head of Admissions in Student Recruitment & Admissions for advice on countries currently covered by this arrangement.

14. Record keeping for applicants requiring a student visa

- 14.1. Evidence of English language qualifications **must** be recorded in the applicant's EUCLID record. This includes, for example, copies of English language tests or qualification certificates, degree certificates from institutions in the Home Office designated majority

English-speaking countries list or which have been approved through the University of Edinburgh due diligence process, and 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 until 12 months following graduation.

15. Process for the consideration of flexibility

- 15.1.** All 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 justify the consideration of additional information. For example, if an applicant has a degree that meets the requirements of the policy but is now out of date, evidence that the applicant has continued to live and work or study in a majority English-speaking country since graduation may be taken into account in determining whether the applicant meets the appropriate academic English language standards.
- 15.2.** Each College has a process by which a case for the consideration of flexibility can be raised by staff to a delegated senior person within the College who will assess the request for validity. 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.
- 15.3.** 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:
- 15.3.1.** 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 using the English language flexibility request form, which is available on the Student Recruitment & Admissions wiki.
 - 15.3.2.** The Head of Admissions, or delegated representative, will assess the evidence provided and will decide whether the case for flexibility can be determined based on delegated authority from the convenor of the Student Recruitment Strategy Group.
 - 15.3.3.** Where the case for flexibility falls out with the Head of Admissions' delegated authority, the decision on whether flexibility can be granted will be taken by the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions or delegated representative.
- 15.4.** Decisions on two categories of English language flexibility requests have been delegated to the Colleges and can be determined by senior members of College admissions staff who have been given that responsibility by the Head of the College. These categories are:
- 15.4.1.**
- Where an applicant has completed a degree in a majority English-speaking country or at an approved university more than five years previously, or

- has met English language entry requirements with an IELTS or TOEFL test which is more than two years old **and**
- where there is documentary evidence in the form of work references and/or payslips or tax documents confirming that the student has lived and worked continuously in a MESC since graduation or the date of their English language test.

15.4.2.

- Where a student has an IELTS or TOEFL test which is within the two-year expiry date but which is below the entry requirement for their degree, but which is at or above the agreed University of Edinburgh minimum requirement.

16. Process for the assessment of English language qualifications for entry

16.1. The University's AQG, reporting to the SRFSG, carries out due diligence on all qualifications before their acceptance for University entry purposes.

16.2. 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?

16.3. The minimum grade or score required in an approved qualification 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 student visa purposes.

16.4. 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, based on decisions made by the AQG and SRFSG.

17. Qualifications which are no longer approved for entry

17.1. If it is decided that a qualification which was previously accepted as meeting English language competency requirements is no longer to be accepted, AQG will formally confirm this decision to provide a clear audit trail of any such decisions.

18. Data protection

- 18.1.** The University of Edinburgh holds information about everyone who applies and studies at the institution. Information supplied as part of an application is used to administer the admissions process and may be shared with UCAS or other bodies to verify the identity, qualifications or references of an applicant. Information may also be used in an anonymised form for statistical purposes, which may be subsequently published or passed to government bodies such as the SFC or HESA to guide policy and funding allocation.
- 18.2.** Information held on successful applicants will be additionally used to administer studies, monitor performance and attendance, and provide student support. Further information about the University's use of data is available from the University's [Data Protection Officer](#).

19. Responsibilities

- SRA Admission team [Monitors effectiveness of policy/reviews/amends]
- College undergraduate and postgraduate offices [implement policy and provide feedback to SRA]
- AQS assesses and reviews English language qualifications and determines their suitability.

20. Related policies

- University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy

21. Policy version history

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

- First approved by Recruitment & Admissions Strategy Group, May 2014
- Version 6: Revised and approved by the Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group, February 2022
- Minor formatting revisions completed April 2023
- Minor revisions November 2023
- Addition of clause 8.9 regarding postgraduate applicants who have completed a degree taught and assessed in English at a recognised university in a non-majority English-speaking country December 2023
- Minor revisions February 2024

22. Appendix 1.

UK student visa English language requirements

1. The Immigration Rules stipulated by the Home Office UKVI, require sponsors to ensure that all applicants for a student visa can demonstrate a sufficient standard of English.
2. For degree-level study, English language capability must be at least equivalent to level B2 of the 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 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 its methods of assessment for establishing the suitability of English language qualifications for entry.
5. Some English language tests expire after a specified 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](#):
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 a student visa. 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
 - Ireland
 - Jamaica
 - Malta
 - New Zealand
 - St Kitts and Nevis
 - St Lucia
 - St Vincent and the Grenadines
 - Trinidad and Tobago
 - UK
 - 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 a student visa:
 - Antigua and Barbuda
 - Australia
 - The Bahamas
 - Barbados
 - Belize
 - Dominica
 - Jamaica
 - Malta
 - New Zealand
 - St Kitts and Nevis
 - St Lucia
 - St Vincent and the Grenadines

- Grenada
- Guyana
- Ireland

- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Kingdom
- United States of America