

Learning and Teaching Committee

Subject: Assessing English Language Competency for International Students to ensure they meet minimum UKVI requirements

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Summary:

This paper summarises the ways in which the University assesses the English language competency of non-UK students to ensure that they meet the minimum level as required by UK Visas and Immigration for a student visa.

Background:

The UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requires that students being admitted to a degree-level or above course are assessed as being competent in English language at a minimum B2 Level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) by the sponsoring institution.

If the sponsor is a Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the student is being admitted onto a degree level course or above, the HEI is permitted to choose how to assess the student's English language competency. However, HEIs must ensure that the student is proficient to B2 Level in all four components (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing).

If the student has been awarded a degree or equivalent qualification from a majority English language speaking country, or is a national of a majority English language speaking country, (as defined by [UKVI guidance](#)) the University is **not** required to confirm their English language competence at CEFR level B2 through a separate test or qualification.

If the sponsor is not a HEI, or the student is being admitted to a course below degree level, the sponsor must assess the student's English language by way of one of the UKVI's list of recognised Secure English Language Tests (SELTs).

Loughborough University policy and procedure on assessing students' English language for degree-level study or above

Loughborough University's minimum English language requirements are detailed on the University website www.lboro.ac.uk/international/apply/english-language-requirements/ (see Appendix 1). These requirements are at CEFR Level B2 or higher. In order to meet the University's minimum English language requirements, a student can submit either a UKVI SELT or another qualification outlined on our website:

UKVI SELT:

Where a student submits a SELT, the relevant Admissions Office will ensure that the results are above the minimum CEFR B2 level in all four components. As the University's minimum English language requirements are higher than the B2 baseline, if a student does submit a SELT with one or more sub-test scores below the B2 requirement they would **not** be admitted to the degree programme and therefore **not** issued with a CAS which is required for a student visa.

Non-UKVI SELT:

If a student submits an English language test or qualification that is **not** on the UKVI SELT list, the University will assess it for competency at B2 level according to some or all of the following criteria:

- Where the test provider has benchmarked the test against the CEFR, and this benchmarking has been reviewed and ratified by the University's Academic Language Support Service and Admissions Office. If there is an option to take the test online, this review will include an assessment of the test security. The required level for admission to a degree-level course will be in excess of CEFR B2 in all four components.
- Where the student has obtained the agreed progression requirement in the ONCAMPUS Test of English (OCTOE) on completion of the ONCAMPUS Undergraduate Foundation Programme or Pre-Master's Foundation Programme. The progression requirement is in excess of CEFR B2.
- Whether the student is a national of a majority English language speaking country, or has obtained a degree or equivalent qualification from a majority English language speaking country (with the exception of a degree obtained in Canada for non-Canadian nationals).
- Whether the student has a UK or overseas school-level qualification outlined on the University's list of acceptable qualifications, which the University is confident assesses speaking, listening, reading and writing at a level suitable for admission to a degree-level programme and which is in excess of CEFR B2.
- Whether the student is permanently domiciled in a country where English is principally spoken, *and* the student's school curriculum was taught in English, *and* the English language qualification was taught in English.
- In some cases where students have applied for a Research degree, whether they have publications written in English language, and in the case of joint publications, that it is clear what writing has been completed by the candidate themselves.

In the above cases, Loughborough University is satisfied that, provided the student achieves a grade at or above the University's minimum English language requirement, which is in excess of CEFR B2, they meet the requirement in Reading and Writing through the course work and examination related to the qualification, and Speaking and Listening through participation in a curriculum taught in the English language.

The University requires that English language tests are taken within the previous two years. School-based English language qualifications are acceptable up to ten years after being taken providing there is ongoing evidence of the use of English language in the intervening period. Very occasionally, qualifications older than this may be accepted provided supporting evidence of the continuing use of English language in the workplace or an academic environment is provided.

Loughborough University has built up considerable experience of teaching students with non-SELT English language qualifications and uses this experience to inform its assessment of competency. A list of acceptable non-SELT qualifications is detailed on the University website. This list of qualifications is reviewed regularly by the Admissions Office and Doctoral College.

The University recognises that it is not either in its or the student's interests to admit them to a degree-level course if their English language skills are not at a sufficient level for them to be able to engage effectively with their studies. Analysis of the progression of students on their degree with a range of English language qualifications is undertaken on an ongoing basis to help inform this policy.

Loughborough University policy and procedure on assessing students' English language for a course below degree level, i.e., the Art and Design Foundation Programme

As the Loughborough University Art and Design Foundation Programme is below degree-level, the University is only permitted to assess the student's English language through a SELT as defined by the UKVI. Students are therefore required to submit a SELT which meets the University's minimum English language requirement, which itself exceeds CEFR B2. Loughborough University's minimum English language requirements are detailed on the University website www.lboro.ac.uk/international/apply/english-language-requirements/ (see Appendix 1).

Verifying English language tests and qualifications

The University seeks to verify English language test results with the provider wherever possible. Where a verification service is not offered, qualifications are verified in the following ways:

- Through the UCAS Awarding Body Linkage (ABL) agreement for undergraduate applicants where this is possible.
- By requesting scanned copies of official qualification documents which show a clear stamp and/or signature.
- By checking original qualification documents where possible.
- By comparing the photo ID on applicants' passports with the photograph on their test results, where this is possible.

Changes to UKVI Sponsor Guidance

The University will review the above policy and procedure as and when updates to the Student Route Policy and Sponsor Guidance are issued by the UKVI, and will amend its practice if required.

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Appendix 1 – Loughborough University minimum English Language Requirements

Tests of English for Speakers of a Foreign Language (taken within the past two years)

Qualification	Minimum grade required
Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)	C/200
Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)	C/180
Cambridge English: First (CFE)	A
IELTS Academic Test (centre based test)	Overall score of 6.5 with not less than 6.0 in each test
LanguageCert (centre-based test)	SELT C1: Pass overall (listening, reading, writing, speaking combined) with no sub-test lower than 33 out of 50
Pearson Test of Academic English (PTE)	Overall score of 67, with not less than 63 in each sub-test.
TOEFL iBT (DI Code = 0815)	Overall score of 92, with not less than 22 in each test
Trinity College London Integrated Skills in English (ISE) III	Pass overall, with passes in each component
University of Warwick International Foundation Programme English for Academic Purposes (Undergraduate Applicants only)	High Credit (60%) overall including minimum Credit (50%) in each component
ONCAMPUS Test of English (OCTOE)	Overall score of 65% with not less than 60% in each test

The following online tests are acceptable for start dates up to and including October 2024:

Qualification	Minimum grade required
TOEFL iBT Special Home Edition (DI Code – 0815)	Overall score of 92 with not less than 22 in each test
LanguageCert: Online test	C1: Pass overall (listening, reading, writing, speaking combined) with no sub-test lower than 33 out of 50
Duolingo English Test	Overall score of 120 with not less than 105 in each sub-test.

UK and Transnational School-Based Qualifications

Qualification	Minimum Grade Required
A/AS Level English language	
CSE English Language	1
European Baccalaureate - Language 1	6.0
European Baccalaureate - Language 2	7.0
European Baccalaureate - Language 3 or 4	8.0
GCSE or O Level English Language	C / 4
IGCSE - AQA Level 2 Certificate in English Language	C

IGCSE - Cambridge English First Language (syllabuses 0500/0522/0627/0990)	C / 4
IGCSE - Pearson Edexcel English Language A (syllabuses 4EA0/4EA1)	C / 4
IGCSE - Pearson Edexcel English Language B (syllabuses 4EB0/4EB1)	C / 4
IGCSE - Cambridge English as a Second Language (syllabus 0510)	B with grade 2 in Speaking Component
IGCSE - Cambridge English as a Second Language (syllabus 0993)	6 with Distinction in Speaking Component
IGCSE - Cambridge English as a Second Language (syllabuses 0511/0991)	B / 6
IGCSE - Pearson Edexcel English as a Second Language (syllabus 4ES0/4ES1)	B / 6 with grade 7 in Speaking Component
International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) – English A (Standard/Higher Level)	4
International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) – English B Higher Level	5
International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) – English B Standard level	6
Scottish Standard Grade English/Scottish National 5 English	C
Scottish Intermediate Grade English	C
Scottish Higher Grade English	C

International School-Based Qualifications

Country	Qualification	Minimum Grade Required
Australia	ACT Year 12 / NTCE / SACE / VCE / WACE	C
	HSC	2
	TCE / QCE	SA
Austria	Reifeprüfung/Matura	2
Belgium	Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur (CESS) / Diploma van secundair onderwijs (DSO)	75%
Botswana	Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)	C
Brunei	Brunei-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (B-C GCE O Level)	C
Cameroon	GCE O Level	C
Canada (must have studied for at least 4 years at at High School in Canada)	High School Graduation Diploma (or equivalent) – Grade 10 English	60%
Denmark	Bevis for Studentereksamen	7
France	Baccalauréat Général; Baccalauréat Technologique	14
	Option Internationale (Anglais/Americain) du Baccalauréat	12

Germany	Zeugnis der Allgemeinen Hochschulreife / Abitur	12 (gut)
Hong Kong	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination Use of English	C
	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, Core English	4
Iceland	Stúdentspróf (from Gymnasium)	9
India	CBSE – All India Senior School Certificate Examination	75%
	ISCE – Indian School Certificate Examination (Class – XII)	75%
	Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal State Boards – Standard XII	80%
Ireland (Eire)	Leaving Certificate – Ordinary Level	C3
Kenya	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE)	C
Malawi	Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE)	C
Malaysia	Cambridge English Language syllabus 1119	C
Malta	Secondary Education Certificate Examinations (SEC)	4
Netherlands	Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO)	7
New Zealand	National Certificate in Educational – Level 2 English	Achieved
Nigeria	Senior School Certificate (NECO)	C6
Norway	Vitnemål for Videregående Opplæring (ENG1002)	4
Singapore	Singapore O Level English	C
	Singapore A Level H2 English Literature/English Language & Linguistics	D
	Singapore A Level H1 English Literature/English Language & Linguistics	C
	Integrated Programme – General Paper* (*only acceptable for applicants following Integrated Programme who have not previously taken O Level English, and are not studying an A Level H1/H2 English paper)	C
South Africa	National Senior Certificate	5
Sweden	Avgångsbetyg / Slutbetyg från Gymnasieskola	C / VG
Switzerland	Certificat de Maturité / Maturitätsausweis / Attestato di Maturità	4
Tanzania	Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE)	C
Uganda	Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)	6
USA (must have studied for at least 4 years at a USA High School)	SAT (Pre-2016): Critical Reading <u>and</u> Writing tests	550 in each test
	SAT (2016 onwards): Evidence-Based Reading/Writing	610
	ACT	27 Composite Score, minimum 26 in English and Reading
West Africa	West African Examination Council Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)	C6
West Indies/Caribbean	Caribbean Examinations Council Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC)	III
	Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)	C
	Bermuda Secondary School Certificate (BSSC)	C

Zambia	Zambia School Certificate	6
Zimbabwe	Cambridge School Certificate / Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) / O Level	C

Previous University Study in the English Language

Qualification	Minimum Grade Required
Undergraduate degree from a University in the UK and studied in the UK (NB: Postgraduate Research applicants must have a minimum 2:2 degree classification)	At least one year of study completed in the UK
Postgraduate degree from a University in the UK	Pass
Undergraduate or Postgraduate degree from one of the following countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada*, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Ireland, New Zealand, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, USA	Pass *Applicants who are not Canadian nationals, but have studied in Canada will need an additional English language test (unless they are nationals of another majority English language-speaking country)