

**Edinburgh Napier University English Language Policy for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study**  
**Last Updated: March 2018**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.2 The University must ensure all applicants whose first language is not English have sufficient English language skills to enable them to successfully complete their programme of study. This policy sets out how the University determines whether the qualifications being presented by an international applicant (including European Union students) satisfy our minimum standards for English Language for entering their chosen programme of study.
- 1.3 In addition, the University must also ensure that it complies with its obligation as a UKVI Tier 4 sponsor. As a sponsor we are obliged before we issue a CAS to a Tier 4 (General) student, to assess their English language ability to ensure it meets the minimum requirements of their course of study and also the requirements of the United Kingdom's Visa and Immigration regulations.
- 1.4 For undergraduate or postgraduate study this typically means that the applicant must demonstrate a level of English Language (in the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking) at least to B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The University has a variety of means of assessing this which are outlined in this policy.
- 1.5 The English Language level for entry to the University's pre-sessional English programmes undertaken in the UK vary from that outlined above and are referenced in the policy below.

**2.1 Edinburgh Napier Minimum Academic English Language Requirement**

- 2.2 The English Language skills required to academically succeed on the programme will typically be outlined within the University's academic entry requirements e.g. for most programmes the University requires all candidates to have the equivalent of SQA National 5 Grade C/GCSE English Grade C in English or better. National 5 English and GCSE English syllabus develops English language skills across Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening. For undergraduate applicants we will seek to benchmark their studies in English to this level from their school based qualifications, whilst for Postgraduate students, we will also typically expect students to have undertaken an undergraduate degree, taught and examined in English.
- 2.3 The relative levels of SQA National 5 and GCSE are measured on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and UK National Qualification Framework (NQF). The SCQF/NQF scale broadly corresponds to the levels of the CEFR, so a comparison between the levels of qualifications is possible.

Table 1: Minimum Standard English Language Qualifications CEFR Comparison

SCQF Level	NQF Level	CEFR Level	SQA	GCSE/A-Level	IELTS
SCQF Level 5	Level 2	B2/C1	National 5 Grades A-C	GCSE Grades A-C	IELTS 5.5-6.5

- 2.4 Given the minimum standards above the University publishes the University's stated minimum English language level for International applicants is an overall IELTS score (or equivalent) of 6.0, with no component less than 5.5. Higher requirements may apply for specific programmes.
- 2.5 Whilst all applicants must meet the minimum academic entry requirements for their programme of study (including relevant English Language requirements), applicants whom are nationals of one of the UKVI listed countries deemed majority English speaking (or have completed a qualification equivalent to a UK degree within the last 2 years in one of these countries) will be exempt from having to prove their English knowledge for student visa purposes.

### **3.1 English Language Qualifications Accepted for Entry to the University**

- 3.2 The University maintains a list of qualifications which are accepted as evidence that the applicant meets or exceeds the English Language entry requirements of the University. This list is managed by the Admissions team within International Operations & Student Recruitment. The list is reviewed annually in September of each academic year prior to the commencement of the next admissions cycle, although where changes in qualification levels or government policy requires an amendment to the policy mid-cycle this will be actioned.
- 3.3 Qualifications or Tests are assessed against the CEFR comparison outlined in Table 1 above.
- 3.4 As part of the annual review process, consultation with and approval sign off will be obtained by the Admissions team from both the Head of Visa and International Support and Head of English Language Provision within the University.
- 3.5 The accepted qualification list is held by the Admissions Team.

### **3.7 Secure English Language Tests**

- 3.7 The University will accept candidates who present with valid Secure English Language Tests from a selected number of test providers. In all cases the test score must be verified via the appropriate channels AND have been taken within two years of the intended start date of the commencement of the applicants course of study at the University. The following policy applies to determining acceptable Secure English Language Tests

- 3.7.1 The University will accept tests undertaken by applicants and achieved at the appropriate level where that test is listed on the UKVI register of Approved secure English language tests and test centres  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>)

OR

- 3.7.2 A Secure English Language Test will also be considered as eligible to meet the University's English Language Requirement where the following criteria can be met:
- 3.7.2.1 The test is benchmarked (with appropriate evidence) to the CEFR and has outcomes that meet the minimum level required by the University.
- 3.7.2.2 The test provider has in place appropriate measures to ensure the security and validity of the test. This will typically include requirements for candidates

to submit identification documents to the test provider e.g. Passport; test monitoring procedures in test centres e.g. video monitoring

### 3.7.2.3 Test scores can be validated by the University

- 3.8 In the case of tests accepted by the University under 3.7.2 above, the University is utilising its privilege under the Tier 4 Sponsor guidelines as an HEI to use its own assessment of candidates English Language ability. The University is determining that the test assesses the candidates English Language skills at the appropriate level. As well as assessing the test using criteria above, the University will also consider feedback and assessment data from students on course to determine whether any amendment to the University's accepted qualifications is required.
- 3.9 In exceptional cases, and after approval by the Head of International Operations and Student Recruitment, a student who has an overall or component score lower than the University entry requirements but who still meets CEFR B2 across all four elements may be accepted.
- 3.10 Where a Secure English Language Test is used to assess an applicant's English language proficiency, a copy of this qualification must be kept on the student's file. The Admissions team will store this information on the student record for all applicants. In addition, the applicant's personal statement and reference(s) are also used as supplementary evidence and are also retained on file.
- 3.11 For applicants being considered for entry onto one of the University's Pre-Sessional English Programmes (and therefore are entering with less than CEFR B2 (IELTS 5.5 across all elements) and requiring a Tier 4 visa to study then the University will only accept a UKVI approved SELT (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>) at the appropriate level of entry to the Pre-Sessional English Language programme.
- 3.12 *International and UK secondary education based qualifications*
- 3.13 The University will in selected circumstances make its own assessment of a student's English language ability (as permitted within the Tier 4 sponsor guidance). The University will assess the achievement (at a stated level) in the national secondary school qualification of selected countries as meeting or exceeding the English Language entry requirements of the University and of equivalence of a minimum of CEFR B2 across the four components of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.
- 3.14 In assessing whether an International Secondary Education qualification meets the University's minimum standards the following criteria will be assessed:
- 3.14.1 The qualification should be comparable to SCQF Level 5/GCSE Grade C or above. The GCSE equivalency should typically be verified via NARIC. Where a NARIC equivalency is not available a substantial independent evidence base must be available to verify equivalency.
- 3.14.2 The medium of instruction in the secondary education system and above should be predominantly English as verified via NARIC.
- 3.15 In ensuring the medium of tuition and assessment is in English the University is determining that the students will be utilising their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in order to achieve the qualification at the required level.
- 3.16 The University will also accept a number of UK based Secondary Education level qualifications (whether taught in the UK or Overseas) as meeting or exceeding the

English Language entry requirements of the University and of equivalence of a minimum of CEFR B2 across the four components of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

- 3.17 The University will also accept International School qualifications where the International School is linked to a majority English speaking country e.g. British International Schools in the Gulf.
- 3.18 The accepted qualification list is held by Admissions.
- 3.19 For undergraduate applicants using an International secondary education based qualification for English Language purposes, their secondary education should normally have been completed within two years of the of the intended start date of the commencement of the applicants course of study at the University.
- 3.20 Where their secondary education studies were completed more than two years previously, the University Admissions team must receive and log evidence to confirm the applicant has been utilising their English Language skills in the intervening period. Evidence might include employment where the medium of communication is English. A supporting reference would be expected to be provided confirming the applicants continued use of English Language in their professional life.
- 3.21 Where an International Secondary Education qualification is used to assess an applicant's English language proficiency, a copy of this qualification must be kept on the student's file for audit purposes. The Admissions team will store this information on the student record for all applicants. In addition, the applicant's personal statement and reference(s) are used as supplementary evidence and are also retained on file.
- 3.22 For applicants being considered for entry onto one of the University's Pre-Sessional English Programmes (and therefore are entering with less than CEFR B2 (IELTS 5.5 across all elements) and requiring a Tier 4 visa to study then the University will only accept a UKVI approved SELT (as detailed above) at the appropriate level of entry to the Pre-Sessional English Language programme.
- 3.23 *International and UK tertiary education based qualifications*
- 3.24 The University will in certain circumstances make its own assessment of a student's English language ability (as permitted within the Tier 4 sponsor guidance) based on the successful completion of a tertiary level qualification in a specific country. In assessing whether an International Tertiary Education qualification meets the University's minimum standards the following criteria will be assessed:
  - 3.24.1 The qualification should be comparable to SCQF Level 6 or above. The equivalency should typically be verified via NARIC. Where a NARIC equivalency is not available a substantial independent evidence base must be available to verify equivalency.
  - 3.24.2 The medium of instruction in the tertiary education system should be English as verified via NARIC.
- 3.25 In ensuring the medium of tuition and assessment is in English the University is determining that the students will be utilising their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in order to achieve the qualification at the required level.
- 3.26 The accepted qualification list is held by Admissions.

- 3.27 For postgraduate applicants using an International tertiary education based qualification for English Language purposes, their tertiary education should normally have been completed within two years of the of the intended start date of the commencement of the applicants course of study at the University. For African applicants refer to 3.29
- 3.28 Where their tertiary education studies were completed more than two years previously the University Admissions team must receive and log evidence to confirm the applicant has been utilising their English Language skills in the intervening period. Evidence might include employment or academia where the medium of communication is English. A supporting reference would be expected to be provided confirming the applicants continued use of English Language in their professional life. In a limited number of countries, the University will not time-bar qualification on the basis that English is the medium of instruction from primary education onwards and is the main language within the business workplace e.g. Applicants from African countries are typically exempt from this 2-year time bar owing to English being the predominant language of communication in Education and Business in those countries..
- 3.29 Where an International Tertiary Education qualification is used to assess an applicant's English language proficiency, a copy of this qualification must be kept on the student's file for audit purposes. The Admissions team will store this information on the student record for all applicants. In addition, the applicant's application including personal statement and reference are used as supplementary evidence and are also retained on file.
- 3.30 In addition to the criteria outlined above **for Postgraduate Research study** applicants must also hold:
- 3.30.1 an honours degree (class I or 2:1) which has been fully taught and examined in English, with a minimum 60% in the project/dissertation
- OR
- 3.30.2 Master's degree which has been fully taught and examined in English, with a minimum 60% mark in the project/dissertation and a minimum 60% overall module average.
- 3.31 For Postgraduate Research study where the applicant previous studies are out with the two-year time frame, then as well as the evidence required as outlined above, the three member interview panel must confirm they have assessed the applicants English language ability by completing the English language waiver form.
- 3.32 For applicants being considered for entry onto one of the University's Pre-Sessional English Programmes (and therefore are entering with less than CEFR B2 (IELTS 5.5 across all elements) and requiring a Tier 4 visa to study then the University will only accept a UKVI approved SELT (as detailed above) at the appropriate level of entry to the Pre-Sessional English Language programme.
- 3.33 Nationals of Excepted counties (i.e. Majority English Speaking Countries) and study within
- 3.34 The UKVI Tier 4 guidance includes a list of countries where Nationals of one of the countries listed would not be required to undertake a SELT for entry to the University. Applicants from these countries will need to meet the minimum academic entry requirements (including any associated with achievement in English), however these qualifications will not be subject to the 'within two years' criteria.

3.35 Nationals from other countries who have undertaken qualifications in one of the countries listed will also be exempted by the University from providing a SELT providing the relevant qualification has been completed within 2 years of the intended course start date. Where the qualification was completed more than two years previously the University Admissions team must receive and log evidence to confirm the applicant has been utilising their English Language skills in the intervening period. Evidence might include employment or academia where the medium of communication is English. A supporting reference would be expected to be provided confirming the applicants continued use of English Language in their professional life. The additional criteria outlined in 3.29 and 3.30 above for Postgraduate Research students will also apply.

### 3.36 Top Up/Articulation Qualifications

3.37 For applicants to Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate programmes who have undertaken a top-up degree, HNC/D or Masters qualification only (i.e. 2 years or less) where the degree has been taught and assessed in English, may also be considered in lieu of a SELT. The following guidelines will be followed:

3.37.1 The top-up degree/HNC/D/Masters must normally have been completed within 2 years of the new course start date

3.37.2 The qualification must have been fully taught and assessed in English.

3.37.3 The qualification was delivered by a recognised institution (e.g. listed on UK Natic).

3.37.4 Evidence of English language ability upon entry to the top-up degree/HNC/D or Masters degree will normally be sought.

3.38 Where the student's previous studies are out with the two-year time frame, then evidence would be required that assures the University that the applicant has been appropriately maintaining their English language skills in an work/academic context, otherwise a SELT would be required.

### 3.39 Other English Language Qualifications

3.40 The University, particularly for applications to it's pathway programmes offered by Edinburgh International College, frequently receives applications from students who have completed English Language or Pre-Masters programmes at other UK Universities or Colleges, or by providers overseas. The University will normally exempt an applicant from requiring a SELT (for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes) where evidence is provided to confirm that:

3.40.1 The applicant has studied on a programme in the UK at a publicly funded T4 Sponsor (including via pathway providers working in partnership with a publicly funded T4 Sponsor) or at an institution in a majority English speaking country (as defined by the Home Office) at a recognised Higher Education institution (e.g. listed on NARIC).

3.40.2 The applicant provides certificate/transcript/letter/course documentation which confirms that the student has completed a course of English study which has resulted in them finishing with an overall level of B2 in the four components (listening, speaking, writing and reading) for entry to Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught study OR C1 level for Postgraduate Research level. Current pass mark for English is 60% or equivalent.

3.40.3 The course of study and qualification achieved would have allowed progression to the providers own degree programme (at equivalent level to that sought for entry to Edinburgh Napier) without recourse to a SELT.

3.40.4 The course must normally have been completed within 2 years of the new course start date at Edinburgh Napier.

3.41 The protocol above relates to satisfying the University's English Language requirements only. The applicant would still need to be assessed as having met the University's academic entry requirements for entry.

### 3.42 Distance Learning

3.43 Distance learning students would be expected to have the same level of English Language proficiency as that required for programmes being delivered in Edinburgh. The University is however able to provide a more flexible approach to the evidence applicants provide to satisfy these requirements e.g. English language tests which are mapped to CEFR B2 but not on the Home Office regulated list or where the applicant has demonstrated strong proficiency in English through other means.

### 3.44 European Economic Area Qualifications

3.45 Whilst students from the EEA are not currently governed by Home Office regulations for Visa and Immigration purposes, it is imperative that the University ensures that students entering the University (either for a full degree or as part of an Exchange or Study Abroad) have appropriate English Language skills to succeed on their course of study.

3.46 The University accepts a number of school based qualifications at specified grades as satisfying the University's English Language entry requirements for Undergraduate entry. In assessing whether an International Secondary Education qualification meets the University's minimum standards the following criteria will be assessed:

3.46.1 The qualification should be comparable to SCQF Level 5/GCSE Grade C or above. The GCSE equivalency should typically be verified via NARIC. Where a NARIC equivalency is not available a substantial independent evidence base must be available to verify equivalency.

3.47 The accepted qualification list is held by Admissions.

3.48 The applicants' studies should normally have been completed within two years of the of the intended start date of the commencement of the applicants course of study at the University. Where their applicants' studies were completed more than two years previously, the University Admissions team must receive and log evidence to confirm the applicant has been utilising their English Language skills in the intervening period. Evidence might include employment where the medium of communication is English. A supporting reference would be expected to be provided confirming the applicants continued use of English Language in their professional life. An exception to this time limit exists for students from Norway where the high level of English Language skills permits applicants to apply within 5 years of completing their previous studies for undergraduate applicants, no time limit for postgraduate applicants.

3.49 Qualifications from other countries would be considered by the Head of Admissions and the Global Mobility Manager and Head of International Operations & Student Recruitment. If not accepted applicants will be expected to present with a SELT or other recognised English language qualification.

- 3.50 The University receives a significant number of European Union applications from partner institutions for Undergraduate and Undergraduate Taught programmes. It is recognised that, as trusted partners of the University, there is scope to accept alternative English language qualifications. It is essential however that both the University and its partners ensure that those coming from a partner institution have the English language skills to enable them to successfully complete their programme of study.
- 3.51 Where specific English language entry parameters are not included in a partnership agreement the University will accept the following qualifications from partner institutions as evidence of sufficient English language ability for entry for degree seeking students (i.e. excludes ERASMUS/Exchange students refer to point 3.51):
- 3.51.1 DUT with English studied in the final two semesters agreed minimum average across both semesters. Applicants will normally need to submit a transcript of grades which indicates the language studied was English. If this is not available, a letter from the Partner institution, confirming the DUT language studied was English will be required (in addition to the transcript of grades).
  - 3.51.2 Internally assessed English language test from the partner institution: Partner institutions which offer their own English language assessments can be accepted. These assessments should test all four components of language learning and should map to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) with students obtaining a minimum of B2 for entry purposes.
  - 3.51.3 Degree studies taught and examined in English: Applicants should provide a letter from their Home Institution confirming their degree studies have been fully taught and examined in English.
  - 3.51.4 Evidence of attainment at required level in approved School based qualifications (see above) alongside evidence of recent use of English in an academic capacity.
- 3.52 In order to ensure applicants are dealt with as fairly and consistently as possible, we will not normally accept a letter from a Partner Institution confirming level of English Language ability, unless this has already been specified in the partnership agreement. In these cases, the School should submit a copy of the partnership agreement alongside a list of applicants who will be coming via this route, to enable the correct offers of admission to be made.
- 3.53 The University will also recognise the same Secure English Language Tests and Secondary and Tertiary Qualifications that it does for non EEA international applicants
- 3.54 Applicants who have previously studied at Edinburgh Napier University via an Exchange or Study Abroad agreement for a minimum of one trimester will also be deemed as meeting our English Language requirements where they have achieved an overall average of 60% or higher in their modules whilst studying at Edinburgh Napier.
- 3.55 Non-tier 4 applicants who have previously studied an Exchange or Study Abroad programme at an English speaking institution and obtained an overall average of 60% or higher in their module results will be deemed as meeting English language requirements if the study has been at least 1 Trimester in duration and completed within the last 2 years.

#### **4.1 Consideration of other qualification in lieu of a SELT**



- 4.2 Where qualifications not presently listed above are to be considered for addition to the list, a request for consideration would be made to or generated by the Admissions team and a recommendation would be made by the Head of Admissions in conjunction with colleagues from International Operations. This recommendation would be submitted to the Head of International Operations & Student Recruitment for approval.
- 4.3 In reaching a recommendation the Head of Admissions would look to ensure that the following guidelines are followed:
  - 4.3.1 The qualification for consideration is deemed sufficient to demonstrate B2 (for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate) and C1 (for Postgraduate Research) in all four components of language learning (speaking, listening, reading, writing).
  - 4.3.2 In the case of school/degree qualifications from a non-majority English Speaking country, NARIC lists that English is normally the medium of instruction from secondary school onwards and the qualification achieved would be equivalent to the standard expected from UK applicants.

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