

# English Language Policy

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## Scope

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All applicants must meet the English language entry requirements for their chosen programmes in order to study at Queen Mary University of London.

This policy sets out to

- a. Create a fair policy regarding the use of English language as an assessment criterion in the university admissions process
- b. Provide guidelines on equivalencies and qualifications, as well as provision of information to applicants on the requirements
- c. Create a fair and transparent process for English language assessment

This policy applies to all credit-bearing Queen Mary programmes at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, to include:

- a. Undergraduate students
- b. Postgraduate students (taught and research programmes)
- c. Study abroad and Erasmus/exchange students
- d. Approved partnerships
- e. Associate students
- f. Distance Learning programmes
- g. Summer School and short course students
- h. Professional development students
- i. Degree apprenticeship students
- j. Foundation certificate students
- k. Pre-Masters students

Students to non-credit bearing programmes are expected to demonstrate a satisfactory level of English language in line with UKVI minimum requirements (IELTS 5.5 in each component or equivalent).

The only exception is for Undergraduate Medicine and Dentistry, which is covered by the SMD admissions policy<sup>1</sup>.

## Core principles

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Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to provide evidence that their English language ability is of a sufficiently high standard to cope with the academic demands of the programme for which they have applied. This evidence must be in the form of a recognised, valid English language test or qualification, and must meet or exceed both UKVI and programme English language requirements, whichever are higher.

The following are the core principles of the English language policy:

- a. All applicants must have a sufficient level of academic English ability in order to be successful on their preferred choice of programme.

<sup>1</sup> Medicine (all MBBS programmes), Dentistry (BDS), undergraduate intercalated programmes in Medicine, MSc Physician Associate. Admissions policies for these programmes are published on the Queen Mary website.

- b. It is reasonable to expect that all students will have an acceptable level of English language ability and this will be verified through graded qualifications or tests to the required level in most cases, and with a document on file.
- c. English language requirements and acceptable equivalent qualifications should be advertised transparently and applications assessed through a fair and consistent approach.
- d. The English language policy is in accordance with all Tier 4 visa and immigration compliance regulations, and outlines the appropriate evidence required for sponsored Tier 4 students.
- e. The Admissions team, in conjunction with and guidance from Language Centre colleagues, are to use their professional judgement and guidelines below to determine if an applicant meets the English language requirements, incorporating UKVI requirements and employing a degree of flexibility where possible and necessary.

## English language tests

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We accept the following English language tests:

- IELTS (Academic or UKVI approved)
- TOEFL iBT
- Pearson Test of English (Academic or Academic UKVI approved)
- C2 Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)
- C1 Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)
- Trinity ISE (UKVI approved)
- LanguageCert International ESOL (UKVI approved)

The above language tests must be taken within two years of the proposed programme start date at Queen Mary University of London. All scores will be verified with the respective provider.

Combined scores from two tests may be considered where all of the following apply:

- Both tests are within validity period
- Both test results are from the same test provider (i.e. two IELTS tests or two TOEFL tests)
- There must be no more than 0.5 difference in the writing component score
- There must be no more than 0.5 difference in the overall score

## Pre-sessional and foundation programmes

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Applicants who fall marginally short of programme English language requirements will normally be permitted to undertake a Queen Mary pre-sessional English programme in order to meet the required English language level. We will also consider BALEAR accredited pre-sessional English language courses on a case by case basis. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking scores will be evaluated against our standard entry requirements.

Foundation courses which contain academic English modules may be considered for entry if the grading aligns to our standard entry requirements.

Pre-sessional and foundation courses must have been taken within two years of the proposed programme start date at Queen Mary University of London.

## High school and degree-level qualifications

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We consider high school and degree level qualifications as detailed in the 'Alternative Qualifications' section of our English language pages (<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/international/international-students/englishlanguage/requirements/>).

These must be taken and valid within **five years** of the proposed programme start date at Queen Mary University of London in order to meet entry requirements.

The five year validity period will be waived for nationals of a majority English speaking country<sup>2</sup>, who have lived continuously in a majority English speaking country, and/or completed all secondary schooling and degree study in a majority English speaking country

### High School qualifications in English language

Selected high school qualifications in English language will be considered for entry to undergraduate and foundation programmes, provided that they meet programme requirements and have been completed within the validity period.

Majority English speaking countries:

Two years of A-Level study completed in a majority English speaking country will automatically be accepted for entry, provided that it has been completed within the validity period.

### Degree study which has been taught and examined in English

Recent degree study in English may be used to satisfy English language requirements. In order to be considered under this category, applicants will usually be asked to provide an academic transcript or confirmation letter from the university administration, confirming that the degree was taught and examined in English and awarded within five years of the proposed programme start date. Applicants studying in a majority English speaking country do not need to provide this confirmation.

<sup>2</sup> As defined by the UKVI. A full list can be found on page 8 of this document.

Majority English speaking countries:

At least two years of undergraduate degree study completed at an approved institution in a majority English speaking country will automatically be accepted for entry, provided that it has been awarded within the validity period.

At least nine months of postgraduate degree study (PG Diploma or Masters level) completed at an approved institution in a majority English speaking country will automatically be accepted for entry, provided that it has been awarded within the validity period.

Other countries where English language may be the medium of instruction:

The following countries are known to offer degree-level study in English<sup>3</sup>:

- Brunei
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Cyprus
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Hong Kong
- Ghana
- India
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Malta
- Mauritius
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Pakistan<sup>4</sup>
- Philippines
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>

<sup>4</sup> Please see Appendix A (list supplied by International Recruitment team 2018)

At least two years of undergraduate study completed at an approved institution in one of the above countries may be used to fulfil the English language requirements if the degree was taught and examined in English, and awarded within the validity period.

At least nine months of postgraduate degree study (PG Diploma or Masters level) completed at an approved institution in one of the above countries may be used to fulfil the English language requirements if the degree was taught and examined in English, and awarded within the validity period.

Degree study taught and examined in English in a country which is not listed above, will only be considered if an approved English language qualification or test was required for entry to that degree. Evidence of this will be requested and reviewed on a case by case basis.

#### Degrees taught overseas but awarded by a Majority English speaking institution

Degrees awarded by Majority English speaking institutions but delivered overseas can be used to meet English language requirements as long as the language of instruction is English and the degree is awarded within the 5 year validity period. Unless specified on the transcript, applicants must provide a letter to confirm that the degree was taught and examined in English. The two exceptions that are accepted to meet the English language requirements are Queen Mary degrees taught overseas and University of London external programmes.

## **Professional registration**

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General Medical Council (GMC), General Dental Council (GDC) and General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) registration<sup>5</sup> can be considered in lieu of an academic English language qualification for entry to full-time, part-time and distance-learning programmes. The GMC, GDC or GPhC registration or re-registration must have been obtained within the past 5 years to be considered valid.

Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP) registration can be considered in lieu of an academic English language qualification for entry to distance learning programmes only. MRCP registration or re-registration must have been obtained within the past 5 years to be considered valid.

<sup>5</sup> The GMC, GDC and GPhC have robust procedures to establish language proficiency in all four English language components.

## Professional experience

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Work experience may be considered to meet the English language requirements where all of the following conditions are met:

- The applicant has a previous academic qualification or English language test that meets the English language requirements for the course but is out of the valid date range. If a previous language test has a score that is only marginally below entry requirements, this will be considered on a case by case basis.
- The applicant has been employed in a role which involves daily communication in English for at least twelve months. This must either be ongoing, or have been completed no more than six months prior to the proposed programme start date.

For applicants who have been employed continuously in the UK for 2 or more years, the following evidence must be supplied:

- o Evidence of continuous employment in the UK. This could be an official letter (on letterhead and signed) from the current employer or alternative evidence such as P60 PAYE forms.

For all other applicants, the following evidence must be supplied:

- o An official letter (on letterhead and signed) to confirm that English is regularly used in the workplace, and that the applicant has proficiency in all four components (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

## Distance learning programmes

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For the purposes of meeting English language requirements, Open University (UK) degrees can be accepted for entry to full-time, part-time and distance learning programmes.

All other degrees taught by distance learning will only be considered for entry to Queen Mary distance learning programmes.

Degree study must be taught and examined in English, and must be dated within five years of the proposed programme start date.

## Non-acceptable qualifications

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Formal or informal interviews, including applicant correspondence, are not acceptable for proof of English language ability.

Written work, such as essays or personal statement, are not acceptable for proof of English language ability.

References or statements confirming an applicant speaks English are not acceptable proof of English language ability when considered solely.

Distance learning degrees (excluding those awarded by the Open University), which do not demonstrate the full range of English language capability, are not acceptable for entry to full-time or part-time degree study. They can be considered for entry to distance-learning programmes only.

Professional qualifications or English language tests aimed at professionals are not acceptable for proof of English language ability where these are considered solely. Registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is not accepted for entry.

Work experience in the medium of English where considered solely without an approved academic qualification/English language test is not accepted for entry.

Language of instruction letters accompanied by a more recent language test which falls more than 0.5 below our entry requirements in one component (reading, writing, listening, speaking or overall).

Professional experience letters accompanied by a more recent language test which falls more than 0.5 below our entry requirements in one component (reading, writing, listening, speaking or overall).

## Evaluation process

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All other qualifications will be considered on a case by case basis to show sufficient English language capability by the Head of the Language Centre and Head of Admissions, or delegated authority.

Qualification evaluation will be guided by equivalency services such as NARIC and benchmarked against CEFR requirements.

## Flexibility

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If an applicant fails to meet the published English language entry requirements, but has a strong profile of English language ability, the School/Institute may make a case for a language waiver. This should include details of any language support available to the applicant and be based on factors such as

- Evidence of sustained use of English language in all four English language ability areas
- Previous qualifications or experience in an academic setting in English
- Evidence of recent English language capability
- Any other relevant details in an applicant's previous history.



Any request to waive the English language requirement will be reviewed by the Head of the Language Centre and the Head of Admissions (or delegated authority). Approval will only be granted in cases where the applicant has clearly demonstrated language proficiency in line with standard entry requirements. Applicants requiring a Tier 4 visa must also satisfy Home Office requirements.

English language will be discussed with each School at the start of the period for confirmation of results to agree an approach to confirmation of English language results. The approach to confirmation of results may be marginally below the advertised English language levels.

All confirmation thresholds for English language will be above the UKVI minimum for the relevant level of study and in accordance with the policy for Tier 4 immigration compliance outlined below.

## Tier 4 immigration compliance

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As a Tier 4 visa sponsor, Queen Mary must ensure that all applicants are able to demonstrate a sufficient level of English ability at the relevant level to succeed on the course.

For main degree programmes at undergraduate or postgraduate level, applicants using an acceptable English language test must meet minimum thresholds in each component score (CEFR B2 level) in order to meet the UKVI minimum requirements to be sponsored for a Tier 4 visa application.

Although CEFR B2 level for English is acceptable for meeting UKVI regulations to be sponsored for a Tier 4 visa application, this is the minimum acceptable level for entry. Applicants must also meet the English language requirements for the course of study, many of which are higher than this minimum.

For entry to programmes below degree level (including pre-sessional and foundation programmes), all English language qualifications must be a Secure English Language Test (SELT)<sup>6</sup> and must have a minimum of 4.0 in each component score (CEFR B1 level) in order to meet the UKVI minimum requirements to be sponsored for a Tier 4 visa application.

Acceptable SELTs are only those listed on the Home Office list of approved tests.

Applicants who are nationals of a country on the Majority English Speaking Country list as set by the Home Office<sup>6</sup> have met the Home Office's English language requirements for a Tier 4 visa.

The list of Majority English Speaking Countries is as follows:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Canada
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Ireland

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/knowledge-of-english>

- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United States of America

Applicants who do not require a Tier 4 visa, but who wish to register for programmes below degree level must still meet the English language requirements for entry. They may present with a non-SELT English language qualification however.

Similarly, applicants who have successfully completed a course of study in the UK as a Tier 4 (child) student or as a student under rules in force before 31 March 2009 (where the course was at least six months' long and completed no more than two years ago) may present with a non-SELT English language qualification.

Applicants who have completed a degree in a country on the Majority English Speaking Country list as set by the Home Office (above, less Canada) have met the Home Office's English language requirements for a Tier 4 visa.

All students that require a Tier 4 visa must have an approved English language test or equivalent qualification or assessment on file with the student record for audit purposes.

Queen Mary will assess any means of meeting English language requirements that does not take the form of a test or qualification in line with Home Office policy.

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