

QMUL English language policy

1. General

1.1 QMUL instituted a general entry requirement for students to have at least grade C in GCSE English or equivalent from 2017 entry. To institute this standard effectively and transparently, QMUL requires a robust English language policy that 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

2. Core principles

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

- a. English language qualifications and tests are required of all applicants regardless of native language spoken to ensure that students have a sufficient level of academic English ability in order to be successful on their preferred choice of programme.
- 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.

3. Scope

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

- a. Study abroad and Erasmus/exchange students
- b. Partnerships
- c. Associate students
- d. Distance Learning programmes
- e. Summer School and short course students
- f. Professional development students
- g. Degree apprenticeship students
- h. Foundation certificate students
- i. Pre-Masters students

3.2 The only exception is for Undergraduate Medicine and Dentistry- see SMD admissions policy.

4. Acceptable qualifications

- 4.1 All applicants need to meet a minimum academic English language standard for admission and to be successful on a course. While not all applicants will need to provide an official English language test or exclusive English language qualification, all applicants will need to provide evidence of sufficient English language ability in line with the CEFR requirements¹ for the course to which they are applying.
- 4.2 Writing is a key element for successful academic studies at university level no matter the discipline as all require a high level of writing skills. To ensure academic success for students, a minimum writing requirement for English language tests will be set out for all Schools and programmes.
- 4.3 English language qualifications used to show evidence of English language ability must be taken within 5 years of the start date of the course, usually 1 September. English language tests (IELTS, TOEFL, PTE, Trinity) must be taken and valid within two years of the start date of the course, usually 1 September.
- 4.3.1 Tests or qualifications may be considered outside of this validity period at the discretion of the Head of the Language Centre and Head of Admissions, or delegated authority.
- 4.3.2 Combined scores from the same English language test are acceptable for meeting the English language requirements, where the tests are taken within 6 months of each other, there is no more than 0.5 difference (or equivalent) between the two tests in individual component scores, and both IELTS tests or equivalent are valid for the start date of the course.
- 4.4 QMUL accepts a wide range of academic qualifications and tests to meet the English language requirements for entry.
- 4.4.1 Normally for UG programmes this will be a qualification gained before degree level study (NQF level 2 as a minimum). A list of acceptable equivalent qualifications and tests can be found here: <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/international/international-students/englishlanguage/requirements/guidelines/index.html>
- 4.4.2 Normally for PG programmes this will be a first degree (NQF level 4 as a minimum).
- 4.4.3 Acceptable equivalent qualifications should be published transparently on the QMUL English language web pages at the beginning of each admissions cycle.
- 4.5 First degrees may be used to fulfil the English language requirements if the degree was taught and examined in English for at least 2 years. Degrees will be considered on a case by case basis and students must supply an academic transcript or confirmation letter from the university administration confirming the degree was taught and examined in English.
- 4.5.1 Partial degrees where at least 2 years was taught and examined in English are acceptable for meeting the English language requirements, provided that all academic requirements are otherwise met to a satisfactory level.
- 4.5.2 UK degrees taught overseas are not accepted to meet the English language requirements unless applicants can provide a letter confirming the degree was taught and examined in English. The two exceptions that are accepted to meet the English language requirements are QMUL degrees taught overseas and University of London external programmes.
- 4.5.3 Previous PG Diplomas, PG Certificates, and Masters degrees that are taught and examined in English only require 1 year of study in English since these qualifications are at a higher level than required for academic English capability to proceed on to a degree programme at

¹ CEFR requirements are normally expressed in terms of and mapped to IELTS scores. IELTS is used as a benchmark for English language requirements as this test is widespread and well-understood, and available internationally.

QMUL. Previous doctorates that are completed in English also fulfil the English language requirements.

- 4.6 Work experience may be considered to meet the English language requirements where the following conditions are met:
- 4.6.1 The applicant has a previous academic qualification or English language test that meets the English language requirements for the course and is out of the valid date range, or is no more than 0.5 points or equivalent short of the English language requirement and is within the valid date range.
 - 4.6.2 The applicant has been employed in a field and role that is directly relevant to the course they are applying to for more than a year at the start date of the course, usually 1 September.
 - 4.6.3 The applicant has been recently employed in a field and role that is directly relevant to the course they are applying for and this experience is not more than 6 months old at the start date of the course.
 - 4.6.4 There is evidence that the applicant's experience in a directly relevant workplace and role was conducted in English for all communication and pieces of work.
- 4.7 GMC and MRCP registration can be considered in lieu of an academic English language qualification for postgraduate distance learning clinical Medical courses only. The GMC or MRCP registration or re-registration must have been obtained within the past 5 years to be considered valid.
- 4.8 All durations of QMUL Pre-Sessional English courses are open to all Schools so as to give students the opportunity to study an English course that prepares them for successful study at QMUL.
- 4.9 The minimum level for entry on to a session of the Pre-sessional course will be determined by the length of the course and the main degree programme English language entry level. Therefore, the Pre-sessional entry requirements will vary by programme.

5. Non-acceptable qualifications

- 5.1 Formal or informal interviews, including applicant correspondence, are not acceptable for proof of English language ability.
- 5.2 Written work, such as essays or personal statement, are not acceptable for proof of English language ability.
- 5.3 References or statements confirming an applicant speaks English are not acceptable proof of English language ability when considered solely.
- 5.4 Distance learning degrees, which do not demonstrate the full range of English language capability, are not acceptable for proof of English language ability.
- 5.5 Professional qualifications or English language tests aimed at professionals are not acceptable for proof of English language ability where these are considered solely.
- 5.6 Work experience in the medium of English where considered solely without an academic qualification is not acceptable for proof of English language ability.

6. Evaluation process

- 6.1 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.

- 6.1.1 Qualification evaluation will be guided by equivalency services such as NARIC and benchmarked against CEFR requirements.
- 6.2 Applications that do not meet the published English language entry requirements but have a profile of English language ability will be assessed holistically on factors such as: 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.

7. Flexibility

- 7.1 QMUL publishes aspirational English language requirements, in line with other academic entry requirements, for all programmes. Students who fulfil the English language requirements will be best placed to succeed on the course and well prepared in terms of academic English capability.
- 7.2 English language assessment at the confirmation of fulfilment of conditional offer 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.
- 7.3 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 in Point 8 below.

8. Tier 4 immigration compliance

- 8.1 As a Tier 4 visa sponsor, QMUL must ensure that all applicants are able to demonstrate a sufficient level of English ability at the relevant level to succeed on the course.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.2.1 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.
- 8.3 For NQF Level 3 qualifications, all English language qualifications must be a Secure English Language Test (SELT) 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.
- 8.3.1 Acceptable SELTs are only those listed on the Home Office list of approved tests.
- 8.4 Applicants who are nationals of a country on the Majority English Speaking Country list as set by the Home Office 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
- Jamaica

- New Zealand
 - St Kitts and Nevis
 - St Lucia
 - St Vincent and the Grenadines
 - Trinidad and Tobago
 - United States of America
- 8.5 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.
- 8.6 All students that require a Tier 4 visa must have an English language test or equivalent qualification or assessment on file with the student record for audit purposes.
- 8.7 QMUL 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.

9. Review

- 9.1 The Marketing, Admissions, and Recruitment Group (MRAG), chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning), approves the English language policy.
- 9.2 Unless there is a need on the basis of external changes such as a change in the UKVI regulations regarding English language requirements, or as directed by MRAG, the English language policy will be reviewed every two years in advance of the start of the admissions cycle.

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