



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH

# English Language Policy for Tier 4 General Students

**October 2018**

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## Summary

### **What is this document about?**

This Policy document stipulates the English Language criteria for Tier 4 General Students, throughout the academic cycle. It is subject to change in line with biannual changes to Government legislation.

### **How does the University check this document is followed?**

This Policy will be of most interest to our staff and students. It will also be of interest to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Office for Students (OfS) and may also be of some interest to the wider public.

### **Who is this document for?**

The Policy is checked intrinsically through the process it details, through consideration at UGEC and operationally through Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships (ASQP), Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA).

### **Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?**

If you have questions about this document please contact Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships, Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA)  
[asqp@port.ac.uk](mailto:asqp@port.ac.uk)

## University of Portsmouth English language Policy for Tier 4 General Students:

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Tier 4 sponsors must ensure that students have met the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) language requirements for non-EEA students requiring a Tier 4 General Student Visa or Part-time Tier 4 Visa to study in the UK.

1.2 This policy stipulates English Language criteria, which will be accepted for Tier 4 students. Tier 4 applicants must meet the Home Office English language proficiency requirements, in all four components of language learning, (reading, writing, listening and speaking) for visa purposes only. In addition all applicants must meet the University's English Language entry criteria. The English Language requirements below need to be assessed in conjunction with the University of Portsmouth entry requirements database for international qualifications, which will outline country specific English Language requirements and waivers.

### 2 Pre-sessional English Language

2.1 To issue a joint Confirmation for Acceptance of Studies (CAS) for a pre-sessional course plus the main course the following applies:

- i) If an applicant's overall score is Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) B2 (not above) with a component below CEFR B2 (IELTS equivalent below 5.5) then a joint Confirmation for Acceptance for Studies (CAS), for a pre-sessional English Language course, can be considered as level B1;
- ii) If an applicant has reached level CEFR B2 in English language ability, but need to improve further within the CEFR B2 level;
- iii) If the pre-sessional course is for the student to progress from B1 to B2, a joint CAS can be issued (this does not include any other moves between level, for example, if a student needs to progress from B2 English to C1 a joint CAS would not apply);
- iv) If the main course is unconditional and at Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF level 6 or above);
- v) For a pre-sessional joint CAS (RQF level 6 or above), the University can make its own English Language assessment in line with its admissions criteria. 'HEI has made their own assessment' must be listed on the CAS and the evidence to support this must be recorded on the University Student Record System.
- vi) The pre-sessional course is no longer than 3 months in duration;
- vii) The pre-sessional course ends less than one month before the main course starts;

2.2 To issue a single CAS for a pre-sessional course only the following applies:

- i) A single CAS can only be issued for pre-sessional courses if the applicant has an outstanding condition on their academic offer but they meet the English Language entry requirements. To progress on to the main course, the applicant can apply for a visa extension in the UK, as long as there is no greater than a month between the pre-sessional course and the main course of study.

- ii) Pre-sessional courses below Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) level 6 require a minimum language entry at CEFR B1 in all four components of language learning (e.g. IELTS: 4.0 in all elements) and must be a Home Office recognised Secure English Language Test (SELT)

2.3 An applicant can be accepted on to a pre-sessional course with a Short Term Student (STS) Visa for up to 6 months or a Short Term study visa for English language purposes only for no more than 11 months (a student cannot study mixed courses under the 11 month route). To enable progression on to the main course the student will be required to apply for a Tier 4 General Student Visa overseas.

2.4 The University will assess and may accept, on a case by case basis, pre-sessional English Language qualifications from education providers within the UK, which meet the English Language ability requirements set out by the Home Office and the University. The list of approved providers shall be maintained by the admissions teams.

### **3 Sub Degree level**

3.1 For sub-degree courses (RQF Level 3-5) the Home Office require Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) B1 equivalent (IELTS 4.0) in all four components of language learning. This must be evidenced via a Home Office recognised Secure English Language Test (SELT) - UKVI referenced IELTS taken around the world and Trinity College Integrated Skills in English (ISE) level 2 & 3, which can only be taken in the UK.

3.2 All non-specified courses/awards below RQF 3-5 require minimum language entry at CEFR B1 in all components of language learning (e.g. IELTS 4.0) in all elements and must be approved by a Home Office approved Secure English Language Test (SELT).

3.3 Applicants who have passed the English Language element of a University of Portsmouth approved UK Foundation Level (RQF 3) course, will be exempt from requiring evidence of English Language to progress on to a course at degree level (RQF 6) or above at the University. The list of approved providers shall be maintained by the admissions teams.

3.4 International Foundation Courses not listed will not be accepted, unless supported by a SELT or where a partnership agreement exists outlining whether or not an English Language test is required as part of the entry criteria.

### **4 Degree level**

4.1 For degree level courses at RQF 6 and above, the Home Office require Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) B2 equivalent (equivalent to IELTS 5.5) in all four components of language learning (reading, listening, writing and speaking). As a Higher Education Tier 4 General Student Sponsor, for only degree level and above, the University is entitled to use its own methods of assessment to evidence English language proficiency. This will be in line with the University's entry requirements for English Language and country specific requirements, which will be based on the course of study.

All academic and Tier 4 requirements must be met before a CAS is issued, unless an applicant meets the criteria for a joint CAS as outlined in 2.1. The University's own English Language assessment must be evidenced on the student record system and shown on the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) as reason SELT is not required; 'HEI has made its own assessment'.

## **5 Postgraduate Research Degree level**

5.1 PGR students must present evidence of an English language qualification of at least IELTS 6.5 or equivalent overall with a minimum of IELTS 6.0, or equivalent, in each language component. An overall score of IELTS 6.0 or equivalent will be accepted as long as the applicant undertakes a recognised pre-sessional English language programme prior to the main course. In exceptional cases, if an applicant is below the required score, by IELTS .5 of a component (or equivalent), where applicable, an assessment via face to face or recorded Skype interview or through written submission of, for example, a Research proposal is acceptable.

## **6 English Language Exemptions**

6.1 Students who have successfully obtained a Bachelor's or Master's degree or a PhD in the UK are not required to provide evidence of English Language competence. Professional or vocational qualifications are not acceptable.

6.2 English language competence is not required for Tier 4 General Student Visa purposes for students studying a short-term study abroad programme in the UK, which is part of their course at an overseas Higher Education Institution in the USA and leads to a qualification of at least equivalent level to a UK bachelor's degree.

6.3 A test provider may exempt the student from sitting a component because of a disability. The exemption will be verified with the awarding body.

6.4 English language competence is exempted for students moving from Tier 4 (Child) into Tier 4 (General).

6.5 The University can apply its own HEI assessment to assess the equivalency of an overseas qualification. The applicant is not required to produce an official document from UK NARIC to confirm evaluation.

6.6 The University will exempt the requirement to evidence English language proficiency if an applicant has achieved the equivalent of a UK HE qualification at RQF level 5 (e.g. HND) or above, which has wholly been delivered in English for the duration of the study period (subject to specific English Language requirements for courses that have professional accreditation). To approve the applicant is required to provide a headed letter from the institution outlining the course was delivered in English. In the absence of this the University will accept other compelling evidence.

## **7 Majority English Speaking Countries**

- 7.1 Students who have previously completed an academic qualification equivalent to a UK degree, which was taught in the Home Office's list of 'majority English-speaking countries' do not have to confirm English language competence. (*Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, USA*).
- 7.2 Students who are nationals of one of the countries listed in point 7, *excluding Canada*, are exempt from meeting Tier 4 English requirements for visa purpose only.
- 7.3 'HEI can make their own assessment' for an applicant who has achieved the equivalent of a UK degree from a Home Office recognised majority English Speaking Country (as listed in point 7). If this exemption is not selected on the University course and management system, it will result in the applicant having a visa refusal unless they provide a NARIC Certificate of Equivalency to confirm this.

## **8. Partnership Agreements**

- 8.1 All partnerships with the University will align with current Tier 4 Home Office regulations for visa purposes only. In addition all applicants must meet the University's English Language entry criteria. The requirements will be outlined in the programme specification documents (PSD) for the relevant course.
- 8.2 International College Portsmouth (ICP) English Language entry requirements will align with the Tier 4 Home Office regulations. The requirements will be outlined in the partnership agreement. Any changes will be approved via the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB)

## **9. English Language Verification**

- 9.1 An IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson or Cambridge Assessment English certificate is required to be verified via the providers' online Verification Service and print screen evidence stored on the University Student Record system, showing the date it was verified.
- 9.2 West African Examinations Council (WAEC) results are required to be verified via the providers' online system. Original copies are not required.
- 9.3 The University shall assess an applicant's IGCSE qualification in all four components of English Language learning, in accordance with the Cambridge Assessment's guidance document. This outlines Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels by grades and skill for each of the Cambridge IGCSE English Language qualifications. Applicants will be required to submit their final certificate of results not a copy of component grades.

- 9.4 The Home Office stipulates 'specific English Language tests' need to be within 2 years of the date of the applicant submitting their Tier 4 application; indicated within Home Office approved secure English language tests, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>. Validity applies to these tests only, the University does not have a validity period on other English Language qualifications. During the University's admission stage the Home Office specified English Language certificates are required to be within the 2 year validity at the point of the start of the course.
- 9.5 It is not acceptable to issue a CAS based on a student's expected English Language results. A copy of an original certificate must be provided during the admissions stage.
- 9.6 A CAS will be issued solely on the discretion of the University as a Tier 4 General Student sponsor, taking into consideration UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) criteria.
- 9.7 Before accepting an English Language qualification or exemption, not specified in this policy, please contact the Director for the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation in Language Sciences and Education (CARILSE) to undertake the appropriate English Language mapping assessment and approval.
- 9.8 Any additional English Language qualification, approved by CARILSE, must be referred to the Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA) Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships (ASQP) for final approval, to ensure it aligns with Tier 4 English Language requirements.
- 9.9 This document is informed by the government's immigration regulations for a Tier 4 General Student. Therefore, is subject to change throughout the admissions cycle.



University of Portsmouth English Language Entry Requirements:

	<b>ICP Integrated courses</b>		<b>Degree</b>	<b>Postgraduate Taught</b>	<b>PGR</b>
<b>UoP</b>	Stage 1 (NQF 3)	<b>5.5</b> minimum 5.5 in each component	<b>6.0 overall with minimum of 5.5 in each component*</b>	<b>6.0/6.5 overall with a minimum of 5.5/6.0 in each component depending on the course of study</b>	<b>6.5 overall with minimum of 6.0 in each component</b>
	Stage 2 (NQF 6)	<b>6.0</b> minimum 5.5 in each component			
	Stage 3 (NQF 7)	<b>6.0</b> minimum 5.5 in each component			
<b>UKVI</b>	<b>Minimum of 4.0 in each component</b>		<b>Minimum of 5.5 in each component</b>	<b>Minimum of 5.5 in each component</b>	<b>Minimum of 5.5 in each component</b>

\*subject to the course of study

Each component = each component of English Language learning: reading, writing, listening and speaking  
IELTS scores align to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)