



<u>Policy Title</u>	English language Policy (UKVI Student Sponsorship)
<u>Policy Category</u>	Compliant
<u>Owner</u>	International Compliance Officer
<u>Group Executive Lead</u>	Chief Operations & Compliance Officer and Secretary to the Board
<u>Date Written</u>	April 2020
<u>Considered By</u>	Executive Board
<u>Approved By</u>	HE Governance Committee
<u>Date Approved</u>	April 2023
<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics
<u>Freedom of Information</u>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
<u>Review Date</u>	April 2024
<u>Policy Summary</u>	The purpose of the NCG Group Policy is to provide further detail in relation to English Language acceptance as part of the International Student recruitment process.

<u>Applicability of Policy</u>	<u>Consultation Undertaken</u>	<u>Applicable To</u>
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form	N/A	N/A
Carlisle	No	Yes
Kidderminster	No	Yes
Lewisham	No	Yes
Southwark	No	Yes
West Lancashire	No	Yes
Professional Services	No	Yes

<u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u>	
<u>Previous Approval Date</u>	<u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u>
<u>Nov 2020</u>	<u>Changes made March 2023</u>
<p>1.1 Clarify FE and HE programmes. 2.4 Specify IELTS "Academic". 2.5 Right to request SELT for RQF 6 and above courses. 3.1 Removal of "IFP" as example of level 3. 4.1 Removal of MA / MBA as examples of courses. 5.1 a) Right to request English test from those on Child Student visa. 5.1 c) and d): "Ireland" and "Malta". 5.2 Clarify procedure for those whose English qualification is older than 5 years. 5.3 Add right to reject application. 6.4 Add discretion to use alternative SELTs. 6.5 c) Add instance where SELT is required. 7.2 Add column for qualification validity. 7.3 Clarify that qualification must be within validity date at start of course. 7.4 Clarify that English tests must be taken in person. Discount option for remote tests. 8.1 Update name of English as a Foreign Language department. 9.2 Add countries where WASSC may be considered. 11.2 Paragraph removed.</p>	



<u>Linked Documents</u>	
<u>Document Title</u>	<u>Relevance</u>
None	N/A

1. Introduction

1.1. NCG sets minimum English language requirements for admission to further and higher education courses as detailed within this policy.

2. UKVI Minimum Band Scores

2.1. UKVI sets minimum English language proficiency levels based on the level of academic programme being offered by the Student Sponsor.

2.2. For courses offered at RQF Levels 3, 4 and 5 the applicant must score minimum CEFR B1.

2.3. For courses offered at RQF Level 6 and above the applicant must score minimum CEFR B20.

2.4. All students who are applying for a course at levels 3, 4 and 5 must take a UKVI approved, Secure English language Test (SELT). NCG will accept both UKVI IELTS Academic and non-UKVI approved IELTS Academic or an alternative English language qualification for admission to courses at RQF Level 6 and above as set out in paragraph 7.2.

2.5. NCG reserves the right to request a SELT for courses at RQF Level 6 and above where there are concerns regarding the language level of an applicant who has taken a non-SELT.

2.6. In complying with UKVI guidelines and noting NCG's commitment to quality, the institution's minimum entry levels are set out as follows:

3. NCG Minimum Band Scores

3.1. For programmes at RQF Level 3 the overall IELTS requirement is IELTS 5.5 with a minimum score of 5.0 in each component or Pearsons PTE with a minimum score of 43 in each component.

3.2. For programmes at RQF Levels 4 and 5 such as the Foundation degree Arts (FdA) or the Foundation degree Science (FdSc) the overall IELTS requirement is 6.0 with a minimum score of 5.5 in each component or Pearsons PTE with a minimum score of 59 in each component.

3.3. For programmes at RQF Level 6 and above the overall IELTS requirement is 6.0 with a minimum score of 5.5 in each component or Pearsons PTE with a minimum score of 59 in each component.

4. Pre-sessional English

- 4.1. NCG may offer 3-month pre-sessional English language courses which precede an RQF Level 6 (BA Hons) or 7 (MBA / MA) main course.
- 4.2. If the student meets the language requirement of the main course (RQF 6/7) as set out in this policy, then there is no further requirement to provide evidence of English language proficiency to cover the pre-sessional course.
- 4.3. If the student scores IELTS 5.5 overall with a minimum 5.0 in each component, then they may apply to study the pre-sessional course, but they must provide a UKVI IELTS (SELT) as per UKVI requirements. Students must take the Newcastle College School of English, Language Test prior to their main course in order to confirm that they have reached the required language level.
- 4.4. If a student scores an overall IELTS 5.0 or below they will not be accepted onto a pre-sessional plus main course using a single CAS.
- 4.5. Students who score an overall IELTS 5.0 or below and require longer English Language instruction can apply for the 11-month extended Short Term Student Visa or in certain, limited circumstances, can apply for a Student Route Visa to study English as a Foreign Language.
- 4.6. Students applying to study English as a Foreign Language on a Student Route Visa for more than 3 months will need to make a separate Student leave to remain visa application for their main course, using a new CAS.

5. Exceptions to the English language requirement

- 5.1. Students are not required to demonstrate English language proficiency through a formal English test if they fall into one of the categories below:
 - a) students moving from Student (Child) into the Student category (NCG reserves the right to test this category of student should it be deemed necessary in the course of the admissions process).
 - b) those who have successfully obtained an academic qualification (not a professional or vocational qualification) from an educational establishment in the UK, which is a bachelor's degree (or above) which has been awarded within 5 years of the start date of the new course.
 - c) those who have previously completed an academic qualification equivalent to a UK degree which was taught in what UKVI calls a 'majority English speaking' country which has been awarded within 5 years of the start date of the new course (see the table below).

A – H	I – P	Q – Z
Antigua and Barbuda	Ireland	St Kitts and Nevis
Australia	Jamaica	St Lucia
The Bahamas	Malta	St Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados	New Zealand	Trinidad and Tobago
Belize		United States of America
Dominica		
Grenada		
Guyana		

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance>

- d) those who are nationals from what UKVI class as ‘majority English-speaking’ countries, (see the table below)

A – H	I – P	Q – Z
Antigua and Barbuda	Ireland	St Kitts and Nevis
Australia	Jamaica	St Lucia
The Bahamas	Malta	St Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados	New Zealand	Trinidad and Tobago
Belize		United States of America
Canada		
Dominica		
Grenada		
Guyana		

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance>

5.2. Students whose UK bachelor’s degree or, overseas bachelor’s degree taught in a majority English speaking country, was awarded more than 5 years from the start date of the new course will be required to provide a new English language test as per the requirements of this policy.

5.3. If there are concerns regarding the level of English which is demonstrated at admissions interview, NCG reserves the right to reject that application.

6. Secure English Language Tests

- 6.1. In certain circumstances students must take a UKVI Secure English Language Test (SELT) in order to prove their English language proficiency.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>
- 6.2. The SELT assesses the student’s English in four components: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- 6.3. SELTs have a validity of 2 years. If a student has a SELT then it must be within its validity period at the point when the academic programme starts, otherwise the student must take the SELT again.
- 6.4. NCG will accept both IELTS Academic and Pearsons PTE Academic SELTs. NCG may apply discretion to accept other types of academic SELTs. The final discretionary decision will be made by the International Compliance Officer.
- 6.5. The circumstances in which a student must take a SELT are as follows:
- The student is applying for a course at RQF Levels 3–5.
 - The student wishes to take a pre-sessional English course before a main course using a single CAS and the student has scored below the required SELT threshold in any one of the four tested components.
 - Where NCG has identified concerns regarding the language level of an applicant who has taken a non-SELT.

7. Assessing an applicant’s English in the absence of an approved SELT

- 7.1. For students studying at RQF Level 6 and above, UKVI permits Higher Education Providers (HEPs) with a track record of compliance, to choose their own way of assessing the English proficiency of their applicants. The HEP with a track record of compliance must ensure the applicant is proficient to a minimum CEFR B2 (IELTS 5.5) in all four English language components: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- 7.2. We will accept the following non-SELT language tests and qualifications in place of a SELT for courses delivered at RQF Level 6 and above:

Test	Test Score	Validity at course start
IELTS Academic (non-SELT)	6.0 overall with 5.5 minimum in each component.	2 years

Test	Test Score	Validity at course start
Cambridge English Assessment (FCE, CAE or CPE)	162–230	2 years
TOEFL	72 overall, (R):18 (W):20 (L):17 (S): 20	2 years
Pearsons PTE	Minimum 59 in each component	2 years
GCSE in English Language	C or Grade 4	5 years
A-Level in English Language	D and above	5 years
AS-Level in English Language	C and above	5 years
2-year foundation degree (RQF 5) studied at Newcastle College	Pass	5 years

7.3. The test listed in 7.2 must have been awarded by the start date of the course as per the validity column.

7.4. To clarify – NCG will not accept any version of an English test which was not taken in-person. All variations of online or remote testing will not be accepted.

8. Newcastle College, School of English, Language Test

8.1. Students who are in the UK can be tested by Newcastle College’s English as a Foreign Language department for courses at RQF Level 6 and above.

8.2. Students will be tested on the four English language components: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

8.3. Students will only be accepted using this method of assessment if they score the equivalent of at least CEFR B2 in all four aforementioned language components.

9. Overseas English Language Qualifications

9.1. We will accept certain overseas English language qualifications as evidence of B2 proficiency for courses at RQF Level 6 and above where UK NARIC confirms their UK equivalent as being GCSE Grade C and above:

Country	Name of Exam	Accepted grades	Validity at course start
Various	West African Senior School Certificate, when awarded by West African Examinations Council (WASSC)	A1 – C6 in English subject / module	Indefinite
Nigeria	Senior School Certificate, when awarded by the National Examinations Council (NECO)	A1 – C6 in English subject / module	Indefinite

9.2. Where students present a West African Senior School Certificate from Ghana, Liberia, The Gambia, or Sierra Leone, NCG may at their discretion request a Medium of Instruction Letter from the student’s awarding institution.

10. Discretionary Assessments

- 10.1. The English as a Foreign Language department at Newcastle College, will advise on any other variants of certification, awards and / or experience which demonstrate the applicant is proficient to at least CEFR B2 in all four language components.
- 10.2. A discretionary assessment can then be made by the English as a Foreign Language department at Newcastle College, for students applying for courses at RQF Level 6 and above. In these cases, an HEP Language Assessment will be entered into the “evidence used” section of the CAS statement.

11. Main-Course English Language Support

- 11.1. International fee-paying students studying academic programmes will be provided with additional English language support where required.
- 11.2. Students studying Higher Education programmes will be given the option to access additional English language support of up to 24 hours per academic year of study to be taken around their main-course timetable. This additional support ensures students are able to build their confidence and develop their



language skills. This supports the values of NCG by promoting inclusivity and inspiring excellence.