

| POLICY / PROCEDURE TITLE | | DATE OF APPROVAL |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| English language Policy (UKVI Student Sponsorship) | | April 2024 |
| APPROVED BY | VERSION NO. | VALID UNTIL |
| HE Governance Committee | 4 | April 2027 |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| OWNER | International Compliance Officer | | |
| GROUP EXECUTIVE LEAD | Deputy Principal, Executive Lead HE | | |
| DOCUMENT TYPE | Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Group Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> | Local Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> |
| PURPOSE | This policy sets out the minimum English Language requirements for admissions to further and higher education courses with must be complied with. | | |
| APPLICABLE TO | All NCG employees, as well as consultants, vendors, agency workers, contractors, service users, trainees/students, volunteers and/or any other parties who have a business relationship with NCG. | | |
| EQUALITY ANALYSIS COMPLETED [POLICIES ONLY] | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | (If EA not applicable, please explain) | | |
| KEY THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS POLICY | <p>UKVI and NCG sets minimum English language proficiency levels based on the level of academic programme being offered by the Student Sponsor and these are outlined under section 2 and 3 of the policy.</p> <p>Students are not required to demonstrate English language proficiency through a formal English test if they fall into specific categories and these are outlined under section 4.</p> | | |
| EXPECTED OUTCOME | Readers are expected to understand the organisational position on the minimum English Language requirements, know their responsibilities in relation to the policy and comply with the terms of the policy. | | |

| MISCELLANEOUS | |
|-------------------------|---|
| LINKED DOCUMENTS | Student Sponsor Licence Policy |
| KEYWORDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Language • Minimum requirements • Application • Sponsor |

Equality Impact Assessment

| EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| | Yes | No | Explanatory Note if required |
| EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in Section 2? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be YES |
| EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Age | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Disability / Difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Gender Reassignment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Race | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Religion or Belief | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Sex | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| Sexual Orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this must be NO |
| EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The answer to this could be yes or no as positive action is lawful. However, an explanation must be provided for clarity. |
| EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct? | The policy author has consulted with peers and appropriate groups of people in the Group and through the Policy Review Council. | | |

1. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out the minimum English Language requirements for admissions to further and higher education courses which must be complied with.

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 B2.
- 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. Discretion can be applied where one or more of the components fall between 51-58 as this is still within the

CEFR B2 range. The decision to accept a score between 51-58 should be made by the International Compliance Officer following the pre-CAS interview.

- 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. Discretion can be applied where one or more of the components fall between 51-58 as this is still within the CEFR B2 range. The decision to accept a component between 51-58 should be made by the International Compliance Officer following the pre-CAS interview.

4. EXCEPTIONS TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

- 4.1. Students are not required to demonstrate English language proficiency through a formal English test if they fall into one of the categories below:

- 4.1.1. 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).
- 4.1.2. 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.
- 4.1.3. 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 Australia The Bahamas Barbados Belize British Overseas Territories Dominica Grenada Guyana | Ireland Jamaica Malta New Zealand | St Kitts and Nevis St Lucia St Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago United States of America |

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

- 4.1.4. 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 Australia The Bahamas Barbados Belize British Overseas Territories Canada Dominica Grenada Guyana | Ireland Jamaica Malta New Zealand | St Kitts and Nevis St Lucia St Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago United States of America |

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

- 4.2. 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.

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

5. Secure English Language Tests

- 5.1. 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>

- 5.2. The SELT assesses the student's English in four components: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. The circumstances in which a student must take a SELT are as follows:
 - 5.5.1. The student is applying for a course at RQF Levels 3–5.
 - 5.5.2. 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.
 - 5.5.3. Where NCG has identified concerns regarding the language level of an applicant who has taken a non-SELT.

6. ASSESSING AN APPLICANT'S ENGLISH IN THE ABSENCE OF AN APPROVED SELT

- 6.1. 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.

6.2. 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 Academic | Minimum 59 in each component, or discretionary allowance for scores between 51-58 (see para 3.3) | 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 |

6.3. The test listed in 6.2 must have been awarded by the start date of the courses as per the validity column.

6.4. 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.

7. OVERSEAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE QUALIFICATIONS

7.1. 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 |

7.2. 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.

8. STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Upon approval, this policy will be uploaded to the policy portal and communicated to staff via The Business Round-Up.

9. STATEMENT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

NCG is committed to providing equality of opportunity. Further details of our aims and objectives are outlined in our [Equality Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Strategy](#).

This policy has been assessed to identify any potential for adverse or positive impact on specific groups of people protected by the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate either directly or indirectly. In applying this policy, we have considered eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between people from diverse groups.

10. STATEMENT ON CONSULTATION

This policy has been reviewed in consultation with members of the Policy Review Council as part of the policy review and approval process.

| VERSION CONTROL | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Version No. | Documentation Section/Page No. | Description of Change and Rationale | Author/Reviewer | Date Revised |
| 1 | New policy | N/A | International Compliance Officer | May 2020 |
| 2 | Subject to full review | Minor amendments | International Compliance Officer | April 2022 |
| 3 | Subject to full review | Minor amendments | International Compliance Officer | April 2023 |
| 4 | Subject to full review: | <p>Changes made:</p> <p>3.1 Discretion to allow Pearsons scores between 51-58</p> <p>3.2 Discretion to allow Pearsons scores between 51-58</p> <p>Removal of section on pre-sessional English as Newcastle College no longer offers this provision.</p> <p>4.1c – inclusion of British Overseas Territories.</p> <p>4.1d – inclusion of British Overseas Territories</p> <p>6.2 clarify Pearsons PTE “Academic” test.</p> <p>6.2 clarify position on discretionary scores between 51-58 for Pearsons PTE tests.</p> <p>Removal of section on Newcastle College English Language tests as it no longer offers this provision.</p> <p>Removal of section on “discretionary English Language assessments”. Newcastle College no longer has an English as a Foreign Language department to offer this provision.</p> <p>Removal of “main course English language support”. Newcastle College no longer has an English as a Foreign Language department to offer this provision.</p> | International Compliance Officer | April 2024 |