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| <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 |
| <u>Previous Approval Date</u> | April 2021 |
| <u>Considered By</u> | Executive Board |
| <u>Approved By</u> | HE Governance Committee |
| <u>Date Approved</u> | May 2022 |
| <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 2023 |
| <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 6th Form | N/A | N/A |
| Carlisle | No | Yes |
| Kidderminster | No | Yes |
| Lewisham | No | Yes |
| Southwark | No | Yes |
| West Lancashire | No | Yes |
| Group Services | No | Yes |

| <u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u> | |
|---|---|
| | <u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u> |
| | <u>Changes made April 2021</u> |
| 5.1 a): removal of "Student (Child)". NCG does not accept those on Student (Child) visas. 5.5: clarification that students who fail second interview due to language concerns will be rejected. 7.2: addition of a Newcastle College Foundation Degree as the basis for an HEP language assessment. | |

| <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 programmes of study 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 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 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. 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 such as the International Foundation Programme (IFP) 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 offers 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 + 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.
 - 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. 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 | New Zealand | St Vincent and the Grenadines |
| Barbados | | Trinidad and Tobago |
| Belize | | United States of America |
| Dominica | | |
| Grenada | | |
| Guyana | | |

- c) 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 | Jamaica | St Kitts and Nevis |
| Australia | New Zealand | St Lucia |
| The Bahamas | | St Vincent and the Grenadines |
| Barbados | | Trinidad and Tobago |
| Belize | | United States of America |
| Canada | | |
| Dominica | | |
| Grenada | | |
| Guyana | | |

- 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 answer further questions on their professional and academic activity in the intervening years.
- 5.3. All Student Route applicants undergo an admissions/compliance interview prior to CAS issuance. Where the student is required to meet the conditions within 5.2 the interviewing Officer will consider the student’s language proficiency at interview.
- 5.4. If the interviewing Officer has concerns that the student’s English is not to the required standard for study at RQF Level 6 and above, the student will be referred for a second interview. The interviewing Officer should consult with the Programme Leader of English as a Foreign Language at Newcastle College before convening the second interview.
- 5.5. If the second interview fails to address the concerns around language proficiency raised at the first interview the student application will be rejected.

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. The circumstances in which a student must take a SELT are as follows:

- a) The student is applying for a course at RQF Levels 3 – 5.
- b) 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.

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 |
|---|---|
| Academic (non-SELT) IELTS | 6.0 overall with 5.5 minimum in each component. |
| Cambridge English Assessment (FCE, CAE or CPE) | 162 – 230 |
| TOEFL | 72 overall, (R):18 (W):20 (L):17 (S):20 |
| Pearsons PTE | Minimum 59 in each component |
| GCSE in English Language | C or Grade 4 |
| A-Level in English Language | D and above |
| 2-year foundation degree (RQF 5) studied at Newcastle College awarded within 5 years of the start date of the new course. | Pass |

7.3. Where the qualifications named in 7.2 were awarded more than 5 years before the start date of the new course (with the exception of IELTS which has a validity of 2-years) the procedure detailed within paragraphs 5.2 – 5.5 of this policy will be implemented. In the case of IELTS, if the certificate validity expires prior to the start date of the new course a new IELTS or alternative form of language testing will be required.



8. Newcastle College, School of English, Language Test

- 8.1. Students who are in the UK can be tested by Newcastle College’s School of English 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 |
|---------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Nigeria | West African Senior School Certificate, when awarded by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) | A1 – C6 in English subject/module |
| Nigeria | Senior School Certificate, when awarded by the National Examinations Council (NECO) | A1 – C6 in English subject/module |

- 9.2. Where the qualifications named in 9.1 were awarded more than 5 years before the start date of the new course the procedure detailed within paragraphs 5.2 – 5.5 of this policy will be implemented.

10. Discretionary Assessments

- 10.1. The Programme Leader of English as a Foreign Language at Newcastle College, School of English 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 Programme Leader of English as a Foreign Language at Newcastle College, School of English 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. All International fee-paying students not from a 'majority English-speaking' country (as specified in 5.1e of this policy) studying RQF Level 3 programmes will be provided with English Language preparation classes throughout their main course. The English Language preparation classes will form a mandatory part of the student's timetable.
- 11.3. 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.