



English Language Policy

Ref:PL035 -v005

Brief Description & Purpose:	This policy outlines the English language requirements, required for all students seeking admission to Northumbria University programmes.		
Applicable to (list cohorts):	Staff: All staff	Students: All students	Third Parties: Not applicable
Effective From:	01 st September 2023	Last Review Date:	March 2024
Approval Authority:	Education Committee	Approved:	March 2024
Executive Owner:	Pro-Vice Chancellor (International)	Business Owner:	Director of International
Next Review Date:	March 2027	Publication External Y/N	Y

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy outlines the English language requirements, required for all students seeking admission to Northumbria University programmes.

1.2 This policy applies to applicants studying a Northumbria Programme:

- In the UK at our Newcastle or London Campus
- Amsterdam Campus
- Via Distance/Online Learning
- At an overseas Transnational Education (TNE) partner where they are receiving a Northumbria Award

1.3 The policy is governed by Education Committee with oversight from Global Marketing and Business (GMB) and Student and Library Academic Services (SLAS).

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Northumbria has a duty to ensure that:

- Our English Language Entry requirements are standardised and transparent.
- Applicants admitted onto our programmes have the appropriate level of English Language ability to succeed on their programme of study.
- Applicants and the institution comply with relevant UKVI Immigration rules related to English Language.

3. Faculty Requirements

3.1 All courses have an approved English Language entry level which is determined as part of the programme approval process.

3.2 These requirements are:

- Agreed at Subject/Programme and level as part of the programme approval process. Any change is approved via an [English Language variation order](#).
- never set below any UKVI English Language minimum score requirements
- subject to review and may be updated in the future if changes to university or external policy requires this. This can include but is not limited to PRSB or UKVI requirement updates.
- Mandatory English language support embedded into programmes will reflect English language entry level. This will be reviewed as part of programme approval.

3.3 An overview of the Faculty requirements can be found on our [Acceptable English Tests webpage](#), but applicants should refer to the individual course pages for exact requirements by course.

4. Assessment of English Language

4.1 Assessment of English language proficiency will be:

- made at the point of application by Applicant Services, Regional Office, Partner Institution or QA Admissions staff, depending on the programme.
- reviewed against the university approved English Language Entry Criteria Approved Tests and Exemptions criteria.
- made a condition of offer, if appropriate, if the applicant is not holding the appropriate score at the point of application.

5. Acceptable Evidence of English

5.1 All applicants regardless of nationality, programme of study or fee status are required to evidence they meet the English Language requirement for the programme.

UK Nationals

5.2 UK Undergraduate: Applicants will typically evidence they meet the requirement by meeting the GCSE (or appropriate equivalent) requirements.

5.3 UK Postgraduate: Applicants will typically evidence they meet the requirement by meeting the GCSE requirement or by holding a UK degree or their equivalent qualifications.

5.4 If a UK national does not hold a relevant UK qualification, they are able to meet the requirement by providing any test listed on our English Language Test and Exemptions Criteria.

International Applicants

5.5 Whilst English language entry requirements are stated as IELTS scores, students can demonstrate their competency through other tests recognised by the University as providing a robust assessment of English language ability. Grading systems on other tests differ and the University identifies appropriate requirements which are deemed equivalent to the published IELTS requirements.

5.6 International applicants will be required to evidence their English Language proficiency by holding/achieving one of the approved tests or exemptions listed on the English Language Tests and Exemptions Criteria.

5.7 The approved English Language Test and Exemptions Criteria are categorised into different sections comprising:

- Global tests – national and international tests
- Country specific tests – tests specific to a particular country or region
- Country specific English medium - qualifications that have been delivered in English medium to an appropriate standard.
- TNE specific – additional tests that have been approved for out-of-country TNE delivery only.
- Not approved – tests we have reviewed but are not currently accepting.

5.8 It also incorporates up to date information regarding, UKVI approved exemptions that include:

- Majority speaking country/degree exemptions
- Secure English Language Tests (SELT)
- Previous visa applications exemptions

Degree level and above study

5.9 In line with UKVI rules, the University accepts a wide range of international tests and exemptions for applicants studying at degree level or above (RQF 6).

5.10 Although some international students may be exempt from providing evidence of English language for Student Route or Short-Term Study visa purposes, evidence of English proficiency is still a requirement of admission and applies to all international applicants, regardless of immigration status. Therefore, they must provide evidence of an approved English Language Test or Exemption.

5.11 Applicants must also ensure that any test taken:

- meets the required Faculty score, including minimum component levels as listed.
- be the latest test they have taken.
- adheres to the additional requirement, below, if applying to a below degree level course that requires a UKVI SELT

Additional requirements for applicants applying for on campus, below degree level programme.

5.12 International applicants who are studying an on campus, below degree level (RQF 3/4/5) programme and require a Student Route Visa are required to undertake a UKVI SELT unless they:

- meet one of the other UKVI Exemptions
- are eligible for a Combined CAS

Below degree level programme at Northumbria include:

- English Language and Study Skills (ELSS)
- International Foundation Programme (non-integrated)

Validity of Each Qualification

5.13 We may stipulate that some tests or exemptions are only valid for a certain time, prior to the start of the course. This will typically be in line with any awarding body or UKVI validity periods which is typically two years. This will be indicated on the English Language Tests and Exemptions, if applicable.

5.14 Applicant Services reserve the right to request evidence of a more recent test should they have concern over length of the period since the test was taken.

Duration between retakes of test

- 5.15 We may specify for certain tests, that applicants who do not meet the grades must not present a retake of the same test until a specific number of weeks has elapsed.
- 5.16 We may also limit the number of retakes of a specific test that the applicant can present as evidence to meet conditions.
- 5.17 Any restrictions on duration between retakes or maximum attempts, will be listed on the English Language Tests and Exemptions Criteria.

6. Additional Information for specific applicant types

English Language and Study Skills (ELSS)

- 6.1 Where an applicant does not meet the level of English required for their target programme but is either 0.5 or 1 IELTS point (or equivalent) away from the score they require they may be eligible to study ELSS Summer School pre – sessional.
- 6.2 Applicants studying ELSS will be required to achieve appropriate grades as defined in the English Language Policy, to progress to their target programme.
- 6.3 Applicants who undertake ELSS may require a SELT unless they meet an exception outlined in section 5.10.

Northumbria University programmes delivered overseas (TNE)

- 6.4 Where Northumbria University delivers programmes overseas via a TNE partner, the university may be more flexible in the range of qualifications it accepts, as students will not be subject to UKVI regulations. These are detailed under the TNE tab of the policy.

Transferring to the UK from a TNE franchise or validated programme overseas.

- 6.5 Applicants who transfer to the UK from a TNE partner institution must meet the university requirements for the programme or have successfully completed one year of study on a Northumbria University programme offered at an approved TNE partner institution.

Applicants studying at Northumbria University Amsterdam Campus

- 6.6 Applicants who have studied the following Degrees* within Amsterdam School of International Business (AMSIB) at AUAS:
- International Business and Management
 - International Business and Languages
 - International Business Fast-track
 - Trade Management for Asia

that are taught and assessed in English, can be used to evidence English Language proficiency for entry to a Northumbria awarded Postgraduate Taught programme delivered at Amsterdam Campus

*This list is not exhaustive and is subject to regular review. Additional Degree subjects can be considered on a case by case basis

Applicants who studied a UK degree programme online due to Covid restrictions

6.7 Applicants who were required to undertake their Undergraduate/Postgraduate UK degree study, online or via blended learning due to Covid are exempt from providing additional evidence of English Language proficiency, providing they successfully complete their Undergraduate/Postgraduate degree (and achieve the academic requirements needed for the programme).

Applicants on a one semester Exchange Programme

6.8 Partner institutions may provide supporting evidence for applicants to confirm they are studying at CEFR B2 in all minimum components, providing the student is entering the UK on a Non-Student immigration route.

7. Approval of Tests and Exemptions

7.1 The English Language Policy is regularly updated to ensure that requirements are in place which reflect the countries where the University actively recruits and English language standards across the student population are maintained.

7.2 Additions to the policy are benchmarked in the sector and reviewed against CEFR where appropriate.

7.3 Any addition to the English Language Tests and Exemptions Criteria, requires approval from the English Language Working Group, on which there are representatives from Recruitment, TNE, Admissions, English Language Centre and Insights and Proposition.

7.4 Any request will be reviewed considering:

- The ability to determine an applicant's overall level and component levels in Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening.
- The test provider's approach to security and verification
- Any UKVI, ECCTIS or sector insight that may be relevant.

7.5 Accepted tests will be reviewed annually to ensure any changes are reviewed, and any performance issues are addressed.

7.6 Requests for additional tests to be added to the English Policy will be considered in March, July, and October of each year commencing July 2023. Relevant, Northumbria Internal Stakeholders will be contacted by email in advance of the review period with guidance on how to request any additions, or amends to the current list of recognised tests and exemptions.

7.7 External Organisations wishing to have an English Language Test recognised for entry by Northumbria, should contact bc.applicantservices@northumbria.ac.uk in the first instance.

8. Compliance

8.1 A Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) will not be issued by the University unless the applicant:

- meets the University and UKVI requirement for English Language
- has provided acceptable evidence of any English Language Tests and this has been stored on their Online Admissions record in line with UKVI Appendix D. requirements

9. Verification

9.1 All English Language Tests will be verified where tools and resources permit this. Please refer to Appendix 1 for details of verification site links.

9.2 Any applicant who presents fraudulent results to the University will have their application or offer revoked.

9.3 If the University is alerted by an English Language Test provider that any results have been obtained fraudulently an applicant's offer/application will be revoked.

9.4 Applicants who have had an offer revoked will only be able to reapply to the University if they are able to provide evidence that did not provide fraudulent documents.

Appendix 1

Verification sites for Common English Language Providers

IELTS	IELTS TRF Verification
Pearson	Pearson Score Check
Language Cert	Certificate Verification LanguageCert
PSI	PSI Results Verification
Trinity	Trinity Results Verification
WAEC	WAEC Score Check
Indian XII	Refer to AST Indian Verification guidance documents
NECO	NECO Score Check