

Education and Training Committee, 10 March 2011

English language proficiency

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper invites the Committee to agree changes to the current tests / qualifications accepted for the purposes of satisfying the Council's English language requirements.

Decision

The Committee is invited to agree the following:

- To cease (effective from 1 April 2011) accepting the following tests / qualifications:
 - Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0500
 - Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0510
 - TOEFL paper-based test
 - TOEFL electronic test

- To accept (effective from 1 April 2011) the following tests / qualifications:
 - Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0522, at grade C or above
 - Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0511, at grade C or above

Background information

None

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

28 February 2011

English language proficiency requirements

1. International applicants

- 1.1 Under the Health Professions Order (HPO) Article 12(1) (c) (iii) all international applicants must satisfy the Council's prescribed requirements as to knowledge of English except where the applicant is an exempt person.

Schedule 3 of the HPO defines an exempt person as:

- (a) a national of a relevant European State other than the United Kingdom,
 - (b) a national of the United Kingdom who is seeking access to, or is pursuing, a relevant profession by virtue of an enforceable Community right; or
 - (c) a person who is not a national of a relevant European State but who is, by virtue of an enforceable Community right, entitled to be treated, for the purposes of access to and pursuit of a relevant profession, no less favourably than a national of a relevant European State.
- 1.2 Under the legislation, the HPC is unable to require European Economic Area (EEA) applicants to undergo a language test (except for applicants for speech and language therapy, please see below). Additionally, the HPC is unable to language test other applicants for whom English is their first language.

2. Language testing

- 2.1 The HPC is able to require evidence of language proficiency from international applicants who are not an exempt and for whom English is not their first language.
- 2.2 The HPC currently requires applicants to achieve an overall score in the academic test of the International Language Testing System (IELTS) of at least 7.0, with no element below 6.5, or equivalent. A number of other tests are approved at levels equivalent to the IELTS.
- 2.3 This requirement, however, is higher for speech and language therapists (level 8 with no element below 7.5). The rationale behind this is that communication is a core skill for this profession. As such, for this profession, the Council is able to require both EEA and non-EEA applicants to undergo this test.

3. Existing requirements

- 3.1 The current tests approved for the purposes of registration are outlined on the following page.

Table 1

Language Centre	Speech and language therapists*	All other professions
Cambridge ESOL	Certificate of proficiency in English (CPE)	Certificate in advanced English (CAE)
Cambridge International Examinations		International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) 0500 (1st language) Grade C
Cambridge International Examinations		International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) 0510 (2nd language) Grade C
International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	8.0 with no element below 7.5	7.0 with no element below 6.5
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA)		Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations (HKCEE) Syllabus B Grade A
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – Paper Test	670	600
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – Electronic Test	290	250
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – Internet Based Test (IBT)	Minimum score of 118/120	Minimum score of 100/120
Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)	990	810
* Speech and language therapists: this Standard applies to both EEA and International applicants. This requirement is higher for speech and language therapists than for all other professions, as communication in English is a core professional skill (see 2b.4 of the standards of proficiency).		

4. Proposed changes to the existing accepted tests

- 4.1 Having reviewed the tests that the HPC currently accepts, the Executive has identified four changes that need to be made, to ensure that the tests accepted are truly 'equivalent' to the IELTS.
- 4.2 In each case, the changes are required in order to ensure that the tests cover comprehension in the following areas of English language proficiency, and that these elements are a compulsory part of the assessment and the final grade achieved: reading, writing, listening and spoken English. The IELTS test covers these four areas of proficiency.

Cambridge International Examinations

4.3 The following qualifications are currently accepted:

- Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0500, Grade C¹
- Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0510, Grade C²

4.4.1 It has been brought to our attention that with both of these qualifications, both the 2011 and 2012 syllabuses do not include a compulsory spoken English component. In the 0500 syllabus it is an optional 'opt in' which does not count towards the final grade that the candidate receives. In the 0510 syllabus it is a compulsory element, however this is separately endorsed and does not count towards the final grade that the candidate receives. Therefore it is proposed that both of these qualifications should no longer be accepted as evidence of English language proficiency and should instead be replaced by the following qualifications which do include spoken language proficiency as a compulsory requirement which counts towards the final grade that the candidate receives:

- Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0522, Grade C³
- Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0511, Grade C⁴

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

4.5 The paper-based test is currently accepted – with a score of 600 required (670 for speech and language therapists). However, this test does not include a compulsory speaking component.⁵

¹ Cambridge IGCSE First Language English - 0500, page 5, 2011 syllabus / 2012 syllabus:

http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subject?assdef_id=852

² Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English - 0510, page 5, 2011 syllabus / 2012 syllabus:

http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subject?assdef_id=854

³ Cambridge IGCSE First Language English - 0522, page 6, 2012 syllabus:

http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subject?assdef_id=852

⁴ Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English - 0511, page 6, 2011 syllabus / 2012 syllabus:

http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subject?assdef_id=1002

⁵ Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – paper-based test:

<http://www.ets.org/toefl/pbt/about/content/>

- 4.6 In addition, the electronic test is no longer available and has been superseded by the internet based test. The internet based test is delivered in testing centres and does include a compulsory component for spoken language ability.⁶
- 4.7 Therefore, it is proposed that the paper-based test and electronic test should no longer be accepted for the purposes of demonstrating English language proficiency on application to the HPC.

5. Decision

- 5.1 The Committee is invited to agree the revised list of tests / qualifications set out in table 2 below as satisfying the Council's English proficiency requirements at entry to the Register.
- 5.2 In summary, the changes are:
- To cease accepting the following tests / qualifications:
 - Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0500
 - Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0510
 - TOEFL paper-based test
 - TOEFL electronic test
 - To accept the following tests / qualifications:
 - Cambridge IGCSE First Language English – 0522, at grade C or above
 - Cambridge IGCSE Second Language English – 0511, at grade C or above

(Continues overleaf)

⁶ Test of English as a Foreign Language – internet based test:
<http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about/content/>

Table 2

Language Centre	Speech and language therapists*	All other professions
Cambridge ESOL	Certificate of proficiency in English (CPE)	Certificate in advanced English (CAE)
Cambridge International Examinations		International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) 0522 (1st language) Grade C
Cambridge International Examinations		International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) 0511 (2nd language) Grade C
International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	8.0 with no element below 7.5	7.0 with no element below 6.5
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA)		Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations (HKCEE) Syllabus B Grade A
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) – Internet Based Test (IBT)	Minimum score of 118/120	Minimum score of 100/120
Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)	990	810
* Speech and language therapists: this Standard applies to both EEA and International applicants. This requirement is higher for speech and language therapists than for all other professions, as communication in English is a core professional skill (see 2b.4 of the standards of proficiency).		

5.3 In order to ensure that applicants are not unfairly disadvantaged, the Committee is invited to agree the changes to the accepted tests effective from 1 April 2011. If an applicant commenced the IGCSE programmes previously accepted prior to this date, these qualifications will continue to be accepted. If an applicant sat the TOEFL paper-based test prior to this date, this will also be accepted for the purposes of registration.