

# UCD English Language Policy



<b>Policy owner</b>	UCD Registry-Admissions  UCD Global	<b>Approval date and body</b>	UPB: 13 February 2025  ACEC: 13 March 2025
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## 1. Purpose

University College Dublin (UCD) admits students to programmes from NFQ level 6 to level 10 and at various stages within these programmes. Teaching in UCD is primarily through the medium of English; applicants must demonstrate a high level of competence in the English language to be admitted.

The purpose of this English Language Policy is to outline UCD's requirements and standards for evaluating the English language ability of all those seeking admission to the University and the University's English language supports for international applicants and learners. This policy reflects UCD's commitment to transparency, quality, and the academic success of international applicants in their programmes of study.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Admissions Policy<sup>1</sup>, and other policies and procedures relevant to the admissions process. It also supports the University's compliance with the *QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners*.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 International Learner

An international learner is defined by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*<sup>3</sup> as 'as a person who is not an Irish citizen but is lawfully in the state primarily to receive education and training' and for whom English is frequently an additional language requirement for admission. This definition, as defined by QQI, includes international applicants and learners on their programme of study.

### 2.2 International Applicant

An international applicant is defined by UCD as a person who is applying to be an international learner and is categorised as:

<sup>1</sup> [https://hub.ucd.ie/isis!/W\\_HU\\_MENU.P\\_PUBLISH?p\\_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=193](https://hub.ucd.ie/isis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=193)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-10/iem-01-he-code-of-practice-october-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html>

### **2.2.a EU Applicants**

An EU Applicant encompasses EU/EEA/Swiss Confederation/United Kingdom applicants who are entitled to EU fees based on the criteria at [www.ucd.ie/fees](http://www.ucd.ie/fees).

### **2.2.b Non-EU Applicants**

A non-EU applicant is an applicant deemed not eligible for EU fees based on the criteria at [www.ucd.ie/fees](http://www.ucd.ie/fees).

### **2.3 Native Speaker**

The definition of a native speaker, within the context of this policy, is an applicant for whom English is their first language.

### **2.4 International Education Mark (IEM)**

The International Education Mark (IEM) is defined as a statutory quality mark (TrustEd Ireland) and is part of a suite of legislative measures designed to protect international learners, as defined under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*. It is awarded to Higher Education and English Language institutions who demonstrate that they meet the national standards to ensure a quality experience for international learners from pre-enrolment through to the completion of their studies.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.5 Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of Ireland's further and higher education system.

### **2.6 International Foundation Year**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) defines an international foundation year as "a programme which provides the formation necessary to enable an international student to meet the minimum academic requirements (all other things being equal) for participation in a higher education programme in an Irish higher education institution and to cope with living and studying in Ireland."<sup>5</sup>

## **3. Scope**

- 3.1** This policy applies to all applicants and students of University College Dublin, including International learners to whom the IEM is applicable.
- 3.2** The University's recognised colleges (linked providers) are required to document their own English Language policy/statement, which must align with this policy.

## **4. Principles**

University College Dublin has six core values driving our culture; Excellence; Integrity; Collegiality; Engagement; Inclusion and Creativity. In line with these values, the University welcomes applicants from a wide variety of backgrounds.

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<sup>4</sup> For further detail on how the definition of an international learner is to be applied for the purpose of the International Education Mark, refer to QQI's 'Policy on Authorisation to use the International Education Mark' [https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-01/policy-on-authorisation-to-use-the-international-education-mark\\_0.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-01/policy-on-authorisation-to-use-the-international-education-mark_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-10/iem-01-he-code-of-practice-october-2023.pdf>

Education in UCD is through the medium of English<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, all applicants are required to demonstrate a high level of competence in the English language.

UCD's minimum English language requirements are approved by the University Programmes Board and apply to all applicants and all levels of study. These may be subject to change and are published on the UCD website.<sup>7</sup>

## 5. Objectives

- 5.1 Support the selection of applicants who demonstrate the capacity to engage with and benefit from the unique UCD educational experience, thereby promoting a diverse student community.
- 5.2 Acknowledge that admitting applicants who do not meet the necessary English language proficiency thresholds could be hindered in their chance of success in their chosen programme.
- 5.3 Promote English proficiency by supporting students in achieving a high level of English proficiency necessary for academic success.
- 5.4 Encourage inclusivity by creating an inclusive environment where all members of the university community are supported in their programme of study and feel comfortable communicating in English.
- 5.5 Provide resources and support services to assist individuals in improving their English throughout their studies at UCD.

## 6. English Language Requirements

- 6.1 All applicants, whether international applicants or otherwise, must demonstrate English competency and meet minimum English language requirements<sup>8</sup>.
- 6.2 For undergraduate entry, those presenting Irish school leaving examinations must have attained at least a grade H7/O6 in English in the Leaving Certificate. Applicants presenting other school leaving qualifications, attained through English, must meet the specified equivalent grade.
- 6.3 At graduate level, native speakers who have taken their prior undergraduate or postgraduate programme through English do not need to present further proof of English.
- 6.4 International applicants who are not native speakers, must present proof of English competency through one of the acceptable English language tests<sup>9</sup> listed at <https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/policiesandgeneralregulations/generalrequirements/minimumenglishlanguagerequirements>. These requirements apply to

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<sup>6</sup> Some module exceptions exist. For further information on these, please refer to the Academic Regulations, [https://hub.ucd.ie/isis!/W\\_HU\\_MENU.P\\_PUBLISH?p\\_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=272](https://hub.ucd.ie/isis!/W_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=GD-DOCLAND&ID=272).

<sup>7</sup><https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/policiesandgeneralregulations/generalrequirements/minimumenglishlanguagerequirements/>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/policiesandgeneralregulations/generalrequirements/minimumenglishlanguagerequirements/>

<sup>9</sup> At graduate level, governing boards may accept prior undergraduate or postgraduate programmes through English as meeting the requirements.

undergraduate and postgraduate applicants (graduate taught and graduate research degrees).

- 6.5 The level of English required to demonstrate English language proficiency may be higher than the university minimum for some programmes as determined by the programme governing board and approved by UPB. In these cases, the requirement will be detailed in the entry requirements for the programmes.<sup>10</sup>
- 6.6 Acceptable English language tests are reviewed for each academic session and will apply for entry in the relevant year. These may be subject to change and are published on the UCD website.<sup>11</sup>
- 6.7 Both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants or students may be required to undertake additional English language instruction via pre-sessional or in-sessional training.

## 7. English for Academic Purposes and Foundation Year Programmes

### 7.1. Pre-Sessional and In-Sessional English for Academic Purposes Programmes

The UCD Centre for English and Global Languages offers English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes to support international learners in meeting the linguistic demands of their specific undergraduate or postgraduate programme. These programmes adhere to the following arrangements:

#### 7.1.a Pre-Sessional Programmes/Modules:

- Designed for applicants with conditional or unconditional offers who need to improve their academic English proficiency before commencing their degree studies.
- Quality assurance is maintained through alignment with UCD's academic standards and periodic evaluations by UCD's Centre for English and Global Languages.
- These programmes do not award ECTS credits but provide a Certificate of Completion to recognize successful participation.

#### 7.1.b In-Sessional Programmes/Modules:

- Tailored for enrolled UCD students who have met the minimum English language requirement for entry and require ongoing English language support during their studies.
- Quality assurance is embedded in UCD's institutional QA Framework, ensuring integration with academic and student support services.
- These modules are credit-bearing, may be GPA neutral, or contribute to students' overall academic success.

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<sup>10</sup> [https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/IW\\_HU\\_MENU.P\\_PUBLISH?p\\_tag=COURSES](https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/IW_HU_MENU.P_PUBLISH?p_tag=COURSES)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/policiesandgeneralregulations/generalrequirements/minimumenglishlanguagerequirements/>

## 7.2 International Foundation Year Programmes

UCD's international foundation year programmes prepare international applicants for their studies and may be provided by an external QQI accredited provider or internally as a UCD award. The following arrangements apply:

### 7.2.a Corporate and Academic Governance:

- The international foundation year for undergraduate applicants operates under a time-bound legal contract between UCD and the external provider with an NFQ award.
- The international foundation year for postgraduate applicants operates under UCD governing boards' requirements and is a UCD award at a NFQ 7 level of certificate or diploma.
- UCD guides academic oversight of the programme content, teaching standards, and progression criteria to ensure alignment with its institutional goals.
- Regular reviews and audits are conducted by UCD and external quality assurance bodies to maintain high standards.

### 7.2.b Quality Assurance, Credit, and Awarding Arrangements:

- UCD recognizes the programme as an approved pathway for eligible international applicants.
- The foundation year is governed by UCD's academic policies and regulations and the international foundation year provider's global quality standards, as articulated in the contract.
- International foundation year undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered in Ireland must carry an award listed on the NFQ with ECTS credits; successful completion with required grades guarantees progression to UCD undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.
- The development and delivery of our international foundation year programmes offered in Ireland will be guided by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012* and its requirements in relation to the International Education Mark to ensure consistency, quality, and alignment with the national qualifications framework.
- International foundation year programmes offered outside of Ireland must meet UCD's academic requirements and may or may not carry an award.

## 8. Roles and responsibilities

- 8.1 Academic Council, on behalf of the University and through delegated authority to the University Programme Board (UPB), is responsible for approving admissions policies, procedures and processes that include this English Language policy.
- 8.2 The University's programme boards are responsible for setting entry requirements for their programmes, including English language competencies (above the minimum requirements).

- 8.3** UCD – Registry Admissions are responsible for ensuring that this policy is operated fairly and consistently in recruitment and student admissions, in line with the University’s strategic aims, sectoral and legislative requirements in relation to the IEM.
- 8.4** UCD Global, through delegated authority, are responsible for the management of non-EU applicants' admissions, coordinating external partnerships for international foundation year programmes, and joint coordination of pre-masters programmes (International Foundation Year), pre-sessional and in-sessional English language programmes with the UCD Centre for English and Global Languages.
- 8.5** UCD Centre for English and Global Languages is jointly responsible with UCD Global for the coordination of pre-masters programmes (International Foundation Year), pre-sessional and in-sessional English language programmes.
- 8.6** Students are expected to actively engage in available language support services and take responsibility for their own language development.

## 9. Related documents

Policy
<a href="#">Academic Regulations</a>
<a href="#">Admissions Policy</a>

Links
<a href="https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/undergraduateapplicants/euapplicants/">https://www.ucd.ie/registry/prospectivestudents/admissions/undergraduateapplicants/euapplicants/</a>
<a href="#">QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners.</a>
<a href="#">Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012</a>
<a href="https://www.ucd.ie/cegl/programmes/pathways/pathways-presessional/">https://www.ucd.ie/cegl/programmes/pathways/pathways-presessional/</a>
<a href="https://www.ucd.ie/cegl/programmes/glm/placement_tests/">https://www.ucd.ie/cegl/programmes/glm/placement_tests/</a>
<a href="https://www.ucd.ie/quality/ucdqualityframework/">https://www.ucd.ie/quality/ucdqualityframework/</a>

**10. Date of Next Review**

February 2027

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