



Home Office

English language – Tiers 1 and 2

Version 13.0

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About this guidance

This guidance gives information for caseworkers on assessing the English language requirements for Tiers 1 and 2 of the points-based system (PBS).

You can find guidance to assess the English language requirements for Tier 4 of the points based system in the attributes section in [Tier 4 guidance](#).

This guidance is based on the [Immigration Rules – appendix B](#).

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email the Economic Migration Policy Team.

Border Force officers can also email Border Force OAS enquiries.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- version 13.0
- published for Home Office staff on 06 April 2017

Changes from last version of this guidance

Changes made to remove references to C1 level of English. It replaces the English Language modernised guidance version 12 which has been withdrawn and archived.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Immigration Rules – appendix B](#)

[Immigration Rules – appendix O](#)

Key facts

Applicants must meet the English language requirement and score 10 points for their English language skills, unless they are:

- exempt
- applying under the Tier 1 (Investor) category
- applying under Tier 1 (Exceptional talent)
- applying under Tier 2 (Intra-company transfer)
- applying under Tier 5

Assessing English language

If the applicant is claiming either points for the English language requirement or an exemption, you must check whether to award points. See the following links:

- [National of a majority English speaking country](#)
- [English language test](#)
- [Degree taught in English](#)
- [English language exemptions or no requirement](#)

For safeguarding and promoting child welfare information – please see the following link: Safeguard and promote child welfare

Related content

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Related external links

[Immigration Rules – appendix B](#)
[Immigration Rules – appendix O](#)

Level of English required

To score points for passing an English language test, applicants must have passed a test at or above the level required for the tier in which they are applying. To score points for a qualification taught in English, it must have been taught in English to the appropriate level. The tables below set out the level of English required for each tier:

Tier 1

Category	Type of application	Level of knowledge of English equivalent to
Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)	Entry clearance and leave to remain.	A knowledge of English equivalent to level B1 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.
Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneur)	Entry clearance and leave to remain.	A knowledge of English equivalent to level B1 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.

Tier 2

Category	Type of application	Level of knowledge of English equivalent to
Tier 2 (Minister of religion)	Entry clearance, and leave to remain.	A knowledge of English equivalent to level B2 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.
Tier 2 (General)	Entry clearance and leave to remain, other than the cases in row G below.	A knowledge of English equivalent to level B1 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.
Tier 2 (General)	Leave to remain cases where the applicant previously has leave in Tier 2 (General) before 6 April 2011, or any of the following and has not been granted leave in any other	A knowledge of English equivalent to level A1 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.

Category	Type of application	Level of knowledge of English equivalent to
	routes below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work permit holder • overseas media representative • airline ground staff • Jewish agency employee 	
Tier 2 (Sportsperson)	Entry clearance and leave to remain.	A knowledge of English equivalent to level A1 or above of the Council of Europe's common European framework for language and learning.

Applicants with disabilities, for example hearing difficulties, are not exempt from the English language requirement. They must contact a test provider for details of support they can provide.

Related content

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[Verify test provider](#)

Related external links

[Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment](#)

[Immigration Rules - appendix B](#)

National of a majority English speaking country

This section explains how to check whether to award points for the English language requirement to a national of a majority English speaking country.

Nationals of the countries listed below are considered to be from a majority English speaking country and automatically meet the English language requirement:

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

To prove they meet the English language requirement, nationals of the above countries must submit either of the following:

- their valid passport
- their valid travel document

If you have any doubts about whether any of the supporting documents an applicant has provided are genuine you must do verification checks.

Related content

[Contents](#)

[Award points or refuse: majority English speaking country](#)

Related external links

[Immigration Rules – appendix B](#)

National of a majority English speaking country: passport or travel document not available

This page tells you how nationals of majority English speaking countries can still prove English language requirements for the points-based system if their passport or travel document is not available.

If a national of a majority English speaking country is unable to submit either document at the time of the application, they must give full reasons in the passport information section of the application form. The only valid exceptional circumstances for applicants who have not submitted their documents are that they have been:

- lost
- stolen
- expired and been returned to the relevant authorities
- held elsewhere in the Home Office

If any of these circumstances apply, the applicant can exceptionally provide the following alternative specified documents:

- current national identity document
- an original letter from their home government or embassy

If the applicant submits a letter, it must be an original copy on the letter-headed paper of the government or embassy, and bear the official stamp of that institution.

An authorised official of that institution must issue the letter, and it must confirm the applicant's:

- full name
- date of birth
- nationality

If the applicant has failed to supply their passport or travel documents because they are already held by the Home Office, then you must make attempts to link these documents to the application.

If you have any doubts about whether any of the supporting documents an applicant has provided are genuine you must undertake verification checks.

For information on when to award or refuse points for English language when the applicant is from a majority English speaking country, see: [Award points or refuse – majority English speaking country](#)

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Immigration Rules – appendix B](#)

Award points or refuse: majority English speaking country

This page explains when you can award or refuse points for the English language requirement if the applicant is claiming points for being from a majority English speaking country.

If the applicant submits valid documents to prove they are from a majority English speaking country, you can award 10 points for English language.

If applicant does not provide the documents

You must check all the supporting evidence submitted to see if you can award points another way. See the following links:

- [English language test](#)
- [Degree taught in English](#)
- [English language exemptions or no requirement](#)

If no other supporting documents can be considered as evidence, you must not award points for English language and note the reason for refusing the application on CID. This should be explained fully on the refusal letter.

If the applicant does not score 10 points for English language

You must refuse their application, even if they attained the pass mark for attributes and maintenance and meet all the other requirements of the Immigration Rules.

Related content

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[National of a majority English speaking country](#)

[National of a majority English speaking country – passport or travel document not available](#)

Degree taught in English

This section tells you how an applicant can score points for the English language requirement when they hold a degree taught in English.

An applicant can be awarded 10 points for a degree taught in English if they:

- have the relevant level of English language as shown in the [Level of English required](#) section
- have a qualification (not a professional or vocational qualification) which:
 - is a UK Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or PhD
 - is a qualification awarded by an educational establishment outside the UK, which is considered by UK NARIC to meet the recognised standard of a Bachelor's or Master's degree or a PhD in the UK, and UK NARIC has confirmed that the degree was taught or researched in English to the relevant level
 - is deemed by UK NARIC to meet or exceed the recognised standard of a Bachelor's or Master's degree or a PhD in the UK, and is from an educational establishment in one of the countries listed below

Majority English speaking countries:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Australia
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Republic of Ireland
- Jamaica
- New Zealand
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

Evidence required

To show the applicant has gained the qualification they must provide either the:

- original certificate of the award
- an academic transcript (or original letter for a PhD qualification) from the institution who awarded the qualification, on official headed paper if they:
 - have not yet graduated after successfully completing the qualification

- no longer have the certificate and the institution who awarded it is unable to provide a replacement

The academic transcript (or original letter for PhD qualification) must show the following details:

- the applicant's name
- the name of the institution that awarded the qualification
- the title of the award
- confirmation that the qualification has been awarded
- the date the certificate will be issued (if the applicant has not yet graduated) or confirmation the institution is unable to re-issue the original certificate or award

UK NARIC documentation

If the applicant requires confirmation from UK NARIC that their qualification meets the recognised standard of a Bachelor's or Master's degree or a PhD in the UK, they must provide original documentation produced by UK NARIC.

All applicants score points if UK NARIC has assessed the degree as being taught in English to the appropriate level.

English to level A1

If the applicant is required to be competent in English to level A1 (see the table on the [Level of English](#) section) 10 points will be awarded for a degree taught in English if the applicant has the relevant level of English language and provides the appropriate evidence listed in the [Evidence Required](#) and [UK NARIC documentation](#) sections.

For Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneur) only

An applicant for entry clearance or leave to remain as a Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneur) migrant does not need to provide evidence of a qualification taught in English if they score points in appendix A for having an endorsement from the UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) which awarded the qualification and the endorsement letter confirms the details of the qualification.

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[Degree taught in English](#)

[Check degree certificate](#)

[Award points or refuse – degree taught in English](#)

[Immigration Rules - appendix A](#)

Related external links

[Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment.](#)

Check degree certificate

This page explains how you check if a degree certificate submitted to satisfy the English language requirement for the points-based system is genuine.

To claim points for English language for a degree taught in English, the applicant must provide an original:

- degree certificate
- academic transcript with an academic reference from the awarding body, this is only acceptable when the applicant:
 - is awaiting graduation
 - has lost the certificate and the awarding institution is unable to provide a replacement

For Tier 2 migrants who have a qualification with a significant research bias such as a doctorate, you can accept an academic reference alone. For Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) migrants an academic transcript alone is sufficient.

To verify a degree awarded outside of the UK

You must follow the process in place for verifications within your team. If you are not sure of the process within your team you must ask your line manager.

Degree awarded in the UK

To verify a degree awarded in the UK, you must contact the awarding institution by:

- finding the contact details of the institution on their website
- telephoning and requesting a fax number for student records
- faxing your request with a copy of the certificate or transcript

If you do not receive a reply within 3 days, you must telephone the institution to request a response.

The awarding institution may ask for the written consent of the applicant before disclosing any information. If this happens, fax the signed declarations section of the application form which gives the Home Office the applicant's permission to verify documents.

For information on when to award or refuse points for a degree taught in English, see the [Award points or refuse – degree taught in English](#) section.

Related content

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[Degree taught in English](#)

[Check degree certificate](#)

Award points or refuse: degree taught in English

This page tells you when you can award or refuse points for the English language requirement if the applicant claims points for a degree taught in English.

You can award 10 points for the English language requirement if you are satisfied the applicant has a qualification at degree level, or above, taught in English.

If you are not satisfied with the degree

You must check all supporting evidence submitted to see if you can award points another way. See the following links:

- [National of majority English speaking country](#)
- [English language test](#)
- [English language exemptions or no requirement](#)

You must not award points for English language if no other supporting documents can be considered as evidence and note the reason for refusing the application on CID. The refusal letter must clearly explain why this decision was reached.

If the applicant does not score 10 points for English language

You must refuse their application, even if they attained the pass mark for attributes and maintenance and meet all the other requirements of the Immigration Rules.

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English language test

This section tells you how an applicant applying under the points-based system can claim points for the English language requirement if they pass an English language test.

Approved tests

A new list of approved tests came into effect on 6 April 2015. Any English language tests sat on or after 6 April 2015 must be on this new list. Transitional arrangements apply for tests sat before this date. See the [transitional arrangements guidance](#).

Where 2 or more components (reading, writing, speaking and listening) of an English language test are examined and awarded together, for example a combined exam and certificate for reading and writing skills, the applicant must have achieved the required scores in all the relevant components during a single sitting of that examination, unless exempted from sitting a component on the basis of a disability.

Tests taken within the UK

For tests taken on or after 6 April 2015, you must only accept English language tests from the providers listed in the following table:

English language test	SELT provider	Awarded by	Levels Covered by test	Test validity	Documents required with application
IELTS Life Skills	IELTS SELT Consortium	Cambridge English Language Assessments	A1 speaking and listening. B1 speaking and listening	2 years	None- scores will be verified using the IELTS SELT Consortium online system using a unique reference number which should be stated on the application form)
IELTS	IELTS SELT Consortium	Cambridge English Language Assessments	B1 B2 C1 C2	2 years	None - (scores will be verified using the IELTS SELT Consortium online system using a unique reference number which should be

English language test	SELT provider	Awarded by	Levels Covered by test	Test validity	Documents required with application
					stated on the application form).
Integrated Skills in English	Trinity College London	Trinity College London	A2 B1 B2 C1 C2	2 years	None - scores will be verified using the Trinity College, London online verification system using a unique reference number which should be stated on the application form).
Graded Examinations in Spoken English	Trinity College London	Trinity College London	A1 A2 B1	2 years	None - scores will be verified using the Trinity College, London online verification system using a unique reference number which should be stated on the application form).

Tests taken outside of the UK

For tests taken on or after 6 April 2015, you must only accept English language tests from the providers listed in the following table:

English language test	SELT provider	Awarded by	Levels Covered by test	Test validity	Documents required with application
IELTS Life Skills	IELTS SELT Consortium	Cambridge English Language Assessments	A1 speaking and listening.	2 years	None - scores will be verified using the IELTS SELT

English language test	SELT provider	Awarded by	Levels Covered by test	Test validity	Documents required with application
			B1 speaking and listening		Consortium online system using a unique reference number which should be stated on the application form).
IELTS	IELTS SELT Consortium	Cambridge English Language Assessments	B1 B2 C1 C2	2 years	None - scores will be verified using the IELTS SELT Consortium online system using a unique reference number which should be stated on the application form).

See [appendix O of the Immigration Rules](#) for further information.

You must check the:

- provider, to confirm it is approved by the Home Office for these purposes
- level of qualifications the applicant was awarded
- validity period
- level is met for all 4 components:
 - reading
 - writing
 - listening
 - speaking

Check and verify English language test

You must use the secure English language test (SELT) unique reference number included on the application form to check the provider's online verification system, to confirm that the applicant passed the test.

The applicant does not need to provide any other documentation, for example the test certificate.

The application does not meet the English language requirements if the test does not appear on the online verification system.

You must check all the supporting evidence submitted to see if you can award points another way. See the following links:

- [English language test](#)
- [Degree taught in English](#)
- [English language exemptions or no requirement](#)

Transitional arrangements

Transitional arrangements apply for people who sat a test on or before 5 April 2015. For applications made before 6 November 2015, applicants are able to use their test, provided that the test was named in [appendix O of the Immigration Rules](#) on 5 April 2015.

Details of the tests accepted under these transitional arrangements are available on [GOV.UK](#).

You must not accept these tests if they were taken on or after 6 April 2015.

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[English language test](#)

Related external links

[Immigration rules - appendix O](#)

Online verification

Award points or refuse: English language test

This page explains when you can award or refuse points for the English language requirement if the applicant is claiming points for an English language test.

You can award 10 points for English language if you are satisfied the applicant has passed a test by an appropriate provider, in line with [appendix O of the Immigration Rules](#).

If you are not satisfied with the English language test

You must check all the supporting evidence submitted to see if you can award points another way. See the following links:

- [National of a majority English speaking country](#)
- [Degree taught in English](#)
- [English language exemptions or no requirement](#)

You must not award points for English language if no other supporting documents can be considered as evidence. You must note the reason for refusing the application on CID.

If the applicant does not score 10 points for English language

You must refuse their application, even if they attained the pass mark for attributes and maintenance and meet all the other requirements of the Immigration Rules.

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[Verify test provider](#)

English language exemptions or no requirement

This section tells you which migrants are either exempt from the English language requirement or have no English language requirement.

You can not award 10 points for meeting the English language requirement in a previous grant of leave if false representations were made or a false document or information was submitted (whether it was with the applicant's knowledge or not), in relation to the English language requirement in the application for that previous grant of leave.

You can award an applicant 10 points if they met the English language requirement in a previous grant of leave as a:

- Tier 1 (General) migrant
- Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) migrant
- highly skilled migrant under the rules in place on or after 5 December 2006
- Minister of Religion (not as a Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) migrant) under the rules in place on or after 23 August 2004
- Tier 2 migrant, provided that when they were granted that leave they obtained points for English language for being a national of a majority English speaking country, a degree taught in English, or passing an English language test

You can award an applicant 10 points if they met the English language requirement in a previous grant of leave as a:

- Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneur) migrant
- Tier 2 (General) migrant under the rules in place on or after 6 April 2011
- Tier 4 (General) student migrant, and the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies used to support that application was assigned on or after 21 April 2011

If when they were granted that leave, they also scored points for having knowledge of English equivalent to level B1 of the Council of Europe's Common Framework for Language Learning or above.

No English language requirements

There are no English language requirements for the following tiers:

- Tier 1 (Investor)
- Tier 1 (Exceptional talent)
- Tier 2 (Intra-company transfer)
- Tier 5

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Applications under Tier 2 (General)

This page tells you which migrants are exempt from the English language requirement under Tier 2 (General).

If an applicant applies for leave to remain under this category you can accept English language to level A1 or above if they have previously had leave as a:

- Tier 2 (General) migrant under the rules in place before 6 April 2011
- work permit holder
- representative of an overseas newspaper, news agency or broadcasting organisation
- member of the operation ground staff of an overseas owned airline
- Jewish agency employee

They must also have not been granted leave to remain in any categories other than those listed above under the rules since 28 November 2008 other than Tier 2 (General) and Tier 2 (Intra- company transfer).

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Transitional arrangements

This page tells you how to award points under the transitional arrangements.

You can award an applicant 10 points for English language if they apply for leave to remain as a Tier 2 (General) migrant and have previously been granted entry clearance, leave to enter or leave to remain as a:

- Jewish agency employee
- member of the operational ground staff of an overseas-owned airline
- minister of religion, missionary or member of a religious order
- qualifying work permit holder
- representative of an overseas newspaper, news agency or broadcasting organisation

They must have since been granted leave in any of the following categories:

- Tier 2 (General)
- Tier 2 (Intra-company transfer)
- those listed under the transitional arrangements, as stated above, under the rules in place since 28 November 2008

You can award an applicant 10 points for English language if the applicant:

- is applying for leave to remain as a Tier 2 (Minister of religion) migrant, or
- has previously been granted entry clearance, leave to enter or leave to remain as a:
 - minister of religion
 - missionary
 - member of a religious order
- has not been granted leave in any categories other than Tier 2 (Minister of religion) and those listed under the transitional arrangements, as stated above, under the rules in place since 28 November 2008

You can award an applicant 10 points for English language if they:

- apply for leave to remain as a Tier 2 (Sportsperson) migrant
- have previously been granted entry clearance, leave to enter or leave to remain as a qualifying work permit holder
- have not been granted leave in any categories other than Tier 2 (Sportsperson) and as a qualifying work permit holder under the rules in place since 28 November 2008

You can award an applicant 10 points for English language if they:

- apply for leave to remain as a Tier 2 (Sportsperson) migrant
- have previously been granted entry clearance, leave to enter or leave to remain as a qualifying work permit holder

- have not been granted leave in any categories other than Tier 2 (Sportsperson) and as a qualifying work permit holder under the rules in place since 28 November 2008

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