English Language Proficiency Policy

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') prioritises the student experience and seeks to enable our students to succeed in their studies and beyond graduation.

(2) English language proficiency admission requirements prepare applicants by:

a. indicating the level of English language proficiency that is required to successfully complete a course; and
b. ensuring that admitted students have the necessary English language proficiency for their studies.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This policy outlines the principles that underpin the University's management of English language proficiency, specifies the types of English language proficiency evidence that the University accepts from applicants, and outlines the University's monitoring and reporting of student cohorts to ensure the English language proficiency requirements are appropriate.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to:

a. all applicants to higher education courses;
b. all applicants to vocational education and training courses; and
c. international applicants to enabling and pathway courses.

(5) This policy does not apply to domestic applicants to enabling courses.

(6) This policy applies to all courses offered by the University and employees involved in admissions, course marketing, and course registration or accreditation.

(7) This policy outlines the University's English language proficiency requirements. The Department of Home Affairs may have additional or different requirements for applicants seeking to study at the University on a student visa.

Section 4 - Policy

(8) The Admissions Policy outlines the criteria that an applicant must meet for admission to a University course. English language proficiency requirements form one criterion for admission.

(9) The University's English language proficiency standard is set by Academic Board and is outlined in Table 1 – University English language proficiency standard.

(10) Course-specific requirements are approved by the Academic Programs Committee and published in course

information on the University website.

(11) The University reserves the right to amend the published requirements at any time.

Setting English language proficiency requirements

(12) Prior to approval, the University English language proficiency standard and course-specific English language proficiency requirements must be benchmarked against:

a. Regulator guidance;
b. External accreditation requirements; and
c. Sector practice.

(13) English language proficiency requirements for individual courses will be set during course registration, accreditation, re-registration, and re-accreditation, in accordance with the VET Course Registration Procedure and the Higher Education Course and Unit Accreditation Procedure.

(14) To accommodate the admissions and marketing cycles, the Academic Programs Committee will endeavour to set English language proficiency requirements at least 12 months in advance when amending the requirements for existing courses.

(15) English language proficiency requirements must be included in the course design or course plan in the curriculum management system. The rationale and supporting evidence for setting requirements in excess of the University English language proficiency standard in Table 1, including as a requirement of professional accreditation, must be included with the course design or course plan and submitted to the Academic Programs Committee for approval.

(16) Annual Course Review is informed by course and student data and provides an opportunity to update admissions criteria, including English language proficiency requirements.

University English language proficiency standard

(17) Table 1 – University English language proficiency standard lists the minimum English language proficiency requirements, according to course type, as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores. Part A – Evidence of English language proficiency in this policy provides information about test equivalency and alternative means of meeting the University English language proficiency standard.

a. Domestic applicants to vocational education and training (VET) courses are not subject to the requirements of Table 1. Domestic VET applicants are subject to the requirements in the Vocational education and training courses - LLND section in this policy.

(18) Individual courses may have English language proficiency requirements in excess of the University English language proficiency standard outlined in Table 1. English language proficiency requirements in excess of the University English language proficiency standard must be approved in accordance with this policy and the relevant accreditation procedure.

(19) Individual course English language proficiency requirements may not be set lower than the University English language proficiency standard outlined in Table 1.

(20) Course types not listed in Table 1 do not have minimum English language proficiency requirements but may have course-specific English language proficiency requirements.

Table 1 – University English language proficiency standard

Course type	IELTS Academic test	
	Minimum overall score	Section minimum score
Foundation and pathway courses	5.5	5.0
Vocational education and training courses*	5.5	5.0
Bachelor and Bachelor Honours courses	6.0	6.0
Postgraduate (coursework and HDR)	6.5	6.0

* Domestic applicants to VET courses are not subject to the requirements of Table 1.

Vocational education and training courses – LLND

(21) Applicants who are admitted to any VET course are required to demonstrate they have sufficient language, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (LLND) skills to succeed as per Clause 5.4 of the 2025 Standards for RTOs. The methods for demonstrating this proficiency are recorded in the Training and Assessment Strategy in the Curriculum Management System for each course offered at the University.

a. Students who are given direct entry into a course, such as apprentices and trainees, are given an LLND assessment to indicate any support needs.
b. Students applying for VET Student Loans must be at Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) exit level 3 or higher as part of the entry requirements. For VET Student Loan students, the University uses the LLN Robot, an approved tool according to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.
c. Students applying for non-VET Student Loan courses are assessed against the ACSF via validated LLN tools.
d. Students moving to online learning after they commence at the University must complete the VET Student Online and Distance Study Capability Checklist and keep a record on their student file.

(22) Offers may be rescinded if it is determined that the applicant's LLND is not appropriate for the course. In such cases, alternative pathway options may be provided to the student.

Publication of English language proficiency requirements

(23) Admissions criteria for individual courses, including English language proficiency requirements, are published in course information on the University website.

(24) Through the University website and other publications as appropriate, the University will provide information to applicants about the minimum requirements, including:

a. Pathways to meet English language proficiency requirements;
b. Acceptable English language proficiency evidence;
c. The process of applying for an exception to English language proficiency requirements; and
d. The validity of published English language proficiency requirements.

Demonstrating English language proficiency

(25) Applicants can demonstrate English language proficiency by:

a. current registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA);
b. undertaking an approved English language test (see Table 2 – Approved English language tests);
c. providing evidence of approved prior studies in English (see Tables 3-5 in Part A – Evidence of English language

proficiency in this policy);

d. for domestic VET applicants, completing an LLND assessment.

(26) Individual courses may have requirements in excess of the University English language proficiency standard and/or may not accept all approved English tests or prior studies in English. See course information on the University website for individual course requirements.

(27) Where an applicant provides evidence that satisfies the English language proficiency requirements through multiple pathways, the most recent evidence will be used.

Exceptions

(28) The relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or, in the case of applicants to a higher degree by research course, the Dean of Graduate Studies, may recommend exceptions to the English language proficiency requirements for individual applicants on the basis of other evidentiary documentation.

(29) Requests for exceptions must be submitted to Chair of the Academic Programs Committee and supported by a rationale.

(30) The Chair of the Academic Programs Committee may approve or deny requests for exceptions.

(31) The Chair will report exceptions to the Academic Programs Committee, which must maintain a register of all exceptions to maintain precedents and support monitoring of the excepted student cohort. The register must include the rationale for each exception.

Post-admission monitoring and support

Student support

(32) The University recognises that students will continue to develop their English language proficiency during their studies and may need post-admission support.

(33) Students have a responsibility to be proactive by reviewing feedback and actively accessing resources and support services to develop their academic skills.

(34) Students can access skills development assistance through Language and Learning Support. More information and resources are available on the Library Calendar and the Study skills page.

(35) Academic and teaching staff have an important role in supporting students on their learning journey, including by providing feedback on assessments and classroom activities.

(36) If an academic or teaching staff member judges that a student's literacy is below the standard required for the course or unit they are enrolled in, they will provide the student with information about available resources and support services and may refer the student to Language and Learning Support.

Monitoring and reporting

(37) The University will monitor student progress through Academic Board and utilise data to ensure that:

a. English language proficiency requirements are set at the appropriate level; and
b. Support services are adequately resourced to be responsive and appropriate to student needs.

(38) The Provost will report to Academic Board in line with the Comprehensive Reporting Framework.

(39) Reporting may include information about:

a. Current English language proficiency requirements and changes in the past year;
b. Summary of and trends in the approval of exceptions;
c. Student engagement with support services; and
d. Longitudinal student progress, broken down by:
    i. Cohort;
    ii. Education agent;
    iii. Basis of admission; and
    iv. Level of English language proficiency at admission/test results at admission.

Part A - Evidence of English language proficiency

(40) The University accepts the following results as evidence that an applicant meets the University English language proficiency standard. Individual courses might not accept all types of evidence listed in Part A. See course information on the University website for individual course requirements.

Approved English language tests

(41) Table 2 lists:

a. the English language tests accepted by the University for the purposes of applicants evidencing their English language proficiency; and
b. the scores in those tests that meet the University English language proficiency standard.

(42) Other tests, or variations of the tests listed in Table 2, may not be accepted as evidence that an applicant meets the English language proficiency requirement.

(43) The tests are valid for two years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at the University.

Table 2 – Approved English language tests

Accepted test	Postgraduate requirement (HDR and coursework)	Undergraduate and postgraduate pathway program requirement	VET requirement	International undergraduate pathways requirement
CDU ELICOS – English for Academic Purposes	Successful completion of EAP004	Successful completion of EAP003	Successful completion of EAP003	NA
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic test	Overall minimum: 6.5 No band below: 6.0	Overall minimum: 6.0 No band below: 6.0	Overall minimum: 5.5 No band below: 5.0	Overall minimum: 5.5 No band below: 5.0
Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic	Overall minimum: 58 No score below: 50	Overall minimum: 50 No score below: 50	Overall minimum: 42 No score below: 36	Overall minimum: 42 No score below: 36
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)	Overall minimum: 79 Minimum writing score: 21	Overall minimum: 60 Minimum writing score: 21	Overall minimum: 46 Minimum writing score: 21	Overall minimum: 46 Minimum writing score: 21 Minimum reading, speaking, and listening score: 14
Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)	Overall minimum: 176 No skill below: 169	Overall minimum: 169 No skill below: 169	Overall minimum: 165	Overall minimum: 162 No skill below: 154

(44) The University accepts IELTS One Skill Retake, whereby candidates can retake a single skill within 60 days of sitting their initial test. IELTS One Skill Retake results are valid for two years from the date of the first test (not from the date of the Retake test) to the date of commencement at CDU.

(45) The University accepts results from two test sittings of IELTS Academic, PTE Academic, or TOEFL, taken within a six-month period, if:

a. Both tests were under the same testing system;
b. The overall score in both tests meets the overall minimum noted in Table 2; and
c. The applicant achieved the section minimum noted in Table 2 for each section in at least one test.

Previous studies in English

(46) Tables 3a-3d lists the types of previous studies in English accepted by the University for the purposes of applicants evidencing their English language proficiency. Tables 3a-3d are applicable to courses with requirements in line with Table 1 – University English language proficiency standard. Individual courses may have additional or higher requirements and might not accept previous study to demonstrate English language proficiency.

(47) To meet the English language proficiency requirements, previous studies must have been:

a. delivered in English (medium of instruction was English);
b. completed at an institution from an English-speaking country according to Table 4; and
c. if from a country on the Extended List according to Table 4, completed within the last five years.

(48) Accepted evidence of completion may include:

a. Official transcript;
b. Testamur or completion certificate;
c. A letter from the institution and on the official letterhead; and
d. Results provided by other Australian institutions to the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC).

Table 3a – Applying for enabling programs and VET courses

Previous study	Domestic applicant requirement	International applicant requirement
Australian secondary schooling	Not applicable	Completion of a recognised Australian Year 10 or higher.
Overseas secondary schooling		Completion of a recognised overseas secondary qualification from the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).
Enabling program		Successful completion of a Charles Darwin University enabling program of at least six months duration (0.5 FTE or 40 credit points).
Courses at AQF level 3		Not applicable
Courses at AQF level 4 or higher		Successful completion of one year full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and Extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).

Table 3b – Applying for HE undergraduate courses

Including Bachelor degrees and higher education diplomas

Previous study	Domestic applicant requirement	International applicant requirement
Australian secondary schooling	Completion of a recognised Australian year 12.	
Overseas secondary schooling	Completion of a recognised overseas secondary qualification from the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).	
Enabling program	Successful completion of a Charles Darwin University enabling program of at least six months duration (0.5 FTE or 40 credit points).	
Courses at AQF level 3	Successful completion of a Certificate III or higher at a recognised Australian institution	Not applicable
Courses at AQF level 4 or higher	Successful completion of six months full-time equivalent (0.5 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).	Successful completion of one year full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).

Table 3c – Applying for HE postgraduate coursework courses

Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas, and coursework Master courses

Previous study	Domestic applicant requirement	International applicant requirement
Australian secondary schooling	Completion of a recognised Australian year 12.	
Overseas secondary schooling	Completion of a recognised overseas secondary qualification from the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).	
Enabling program	Successful completion of a Charles Darwin University enabling program of at least six months duration (0.5 FTE or 40 credit points).	
Courses at AQF level 3	Successful completion of a Certificate III or higher at a recognised Australian institution	Not applicable
Courses at AQF level 4 or higher	Successful completion of six months full-time equivalent (0.5 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).	Successful completion of two years full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).

Table 3d – applying for higher degrees by research

Master by Research and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Previous study	Domestic applicant requirement	International applicant requirement
Courses at AQF level 7 or higher	Successful completion of two years full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) at a recognised institution from a country on the list of English-Speaking Countries in standard and extended list where the medium of instruction was English (see Table 4).	

Recognised English-speaking countries

(49) Table 4 lists the countries the University recognises as English-speaking. Applicants who have studied at an

institution from a country on the Extended List must provide written confirmation from the institution that the medium of instruction was English.

Table 4 – Recognised English-speaking countries

Standard List		Extended List		
Antigua and Barbuda	New Zealand	Bermuda	Malawi	Trinidad and Tobago
Australia	Singapore	Botswana	Malta	Vanuatu
Barbados	South Africa	Cayman Islands	Mauritius	Zimbabwe
British Virgin Islands	United Kingdom	Ethiopia	Seychelles	
Canada	United States of America	Fiji	St Vincent and the Grenadines	
Ireland		Kenya	Tanzania	

Senior secondary schooling with English subject/s

(50) Table 5 lists senior secondary schooling with English subject/s accepted by the University for the purposes of applicants evidencing their English language proficiency. Table 5 is only applicable to international applicants applying for undergraduate courses with requirements in line with Table 1 – University English language proficiency standard.

Table 5 – Senior secondary schooling with English subject/s

Country	Senior secondary schooling qualification
	International Baccalaureate Diploma A grade of 4 or higher in English A or in English B Higher Level, or a grade of 5 or higher in English B Standard Level, valid for five years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Canada	A score of 60% in English in the final year of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma or Canadian Pre-University program, valid for two years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Denmark	A grade of 7 or better in Senior High School English, valid for five years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Finland	A grade of 8 or better in English or English A – language within the Upper Secondary School Certificate, valid for five years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Germany	A grade of 3 or better in English in Senior High School exam (Abitur) valid for five years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Hong Kong	Level 4 in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) English Language Examination. Valid for five years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Malaysia	A grade of C6 or better in the General Paper in the GCE 'O' Level 1119 Bahasa Inggeris (English language) subject from the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Note: There are two grades for 1119 Bahasa Inggeris. Only the GCE-O Level grade is accepted. The GCE-O Level 1119 Bahasa Inggeris grade is stated on the SPM result slip; however, it is not available on the SPM final certificate. Valid for five years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
The Netherlands	A grade of 8 or above on completion of 6 years of English at High School, valid for five years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Norway	A grade of 4 on the upper secondary school, valid for five years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.
Singapore	A score of D or better in the General Paper in the Singapore Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) OR a grade of C or better in English Language in the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level). Both are valid for 2 years, from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.

Country	Senior secondary schooling qualification
Sweden	A grade of C or better in English in the Senior School Studies, valid for five years from the date of the test to the date of commencement at CDU.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(51) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(52) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(53) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

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Effective Date	20th January 2026
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Approval Authority	Vice-President Governance and University Secretary
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Responsible Executive	Louise King Provost
Implementation Officer	Lisa-Marie Stones Director Student and Academic Services
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