

Meeting language proficiency requirements: undergraduate study abroad

Guidance for departments regarding language proficiency for undergraduate study abroad in countries where English is not an official language (except for “language for science” degrees)

Contents

- Part 1: Language proficiency expectations, including exceptions.
- Part 2: Guidance for setting the language proficiency for participation.
- Part 3: Tuition provided by the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication (CLCC).
- Part 4: Guidance on whether a student has met the language proficiency for participation.
- Part 5: Other points of guidance.
- Part 6: Points of contact

Part 1

Language proficiency expectations, including exceptions

- For a degree programme that includes a study placement in a country where English is **not** an official language the admitting department should ensure that all relevant undergraduate applicants (*including those who might transfer on to the relevant degree programme after commencing at Imperial*) are fully aware as to:
 - the languages which are applicable for the relevant partner universities.
 - the **language proficiency for participation** an applicant would need to have achieved by the end of the year prior to the year in which the study abroad placement is scheduled to take place (i.e. the minimum level of language proficiency at point of departure on the placement), with reference to language admission requirements set by any individual partner university where higher than the minimum language requirements set out as guidance in Part 2.
 - the normal means for achieving the **language proficiency for participation**. A student should normally adhere to the process indicated by their department to achieve the overall language proficiency for participation.
- While the guidance in Part 2 sets out minimum language requirements it must be the intention of both student and their department to achieve as high a level of proficiency as possible in the time allowed.
- Exceptions:
 - **Mother tongue speakers**: Applicants who can evidence mother tongue status at UCAS or an enrolled student at transfer stage (depending on the degree programme) and where the desired intention is to undertake study abroad in a country where the student’s mother tongue is an official language would not be required to meet the language proficiency for participation. For the avoidance of doubt the waiving of the language proficiency requirement for such cases should be confirmed in writing to the student by the department.
 - **Proficient non-mother tongue speakers**: A sending department may, with any necessary assistance of CLCC, confirm in writing with a student that they have met the **language proficiency for participation** based on other evidence (including an assessment by CLCC where CLCC teach the language). Departments should be wary about the waning/eroding of language proficiency amongst non-mother tongue speakers prior to the study period abroad and to seek the extra counsel of CLCC if it is of concern. For the avoidance of doubt the waiving of the language proficiency requirement for such cases should be confirmed in writing to the student by the department.
 - The use of English in the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark where English is **not** an official language is considered by Imperial to be relatively widespread and therefore the

	<p>need for the department to set a language proficiency for participation can be waived. This will also apply for study periods in the Flemish speaking regions of Belgium.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For study abroad in Zurich where the study plan to be undertaken is wholly in English the language proficiency for participation can be required as normal or it can be waived if by the end of the year before the year in which the study abroad takes place the student has demonstrated sufficient initial proficiency in German (i.e. A2 level). By “wholly” we mean that courses at the host university are taught and examined in English and any project work is supervised in English and any environment in which project work takes place operates in English, especially in terms of health and safety, to the same level as the official languages of the host country). However, for Zurich each [relevant] department should adopt only one course of action, either apply the language requirement as normal or waive it based on the terms above. For the avoidance of doubt, where a study plan to be undertaken in Zurich is partly or wholly in the host language the normal language proficiency for participation guidance applies.
Part 2	<p><u>Guidance for setting the language proficiency for participation.</u></p> <p>Key points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While this guidance sets out minimum levels of language proficiency (with due regard to Part 1, exceptions) it must be the intention of both student and their department to achieve as high a level of proficiency as possible in the time allowed. 2. The department is responsible for the final decision as to whether a student meets the language proficiency for participation, and this includes taking into account where a partner (host) university has set a language requirement that is higher than what is set down in this guidance. See also Part 4. 3. Students requiring language preparation should be made aware by their department of the minimum level they would ordinarily need to achieve for each relevant partner university, and be encouraged to maximise the learning opportunities to achieve the highest level of proficiency possible in the time available. While meeting the minimum level is acceptable Imperial acknowledges that the higher the proficiency the better prepared a student will be to meet the challenges of undertaking study abroad. Therefore, when a student has less than 2 years in which to undertake language preparation before a placement might commence the Dept must be realistic when discussing which partner universities a student has the possibility of meeting language requirements for. <p>The guidance for departments to be able to set a language proficiency for participation for study placements in a country where English is not an official language is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entry (admission) requirements for an undergraduate degree programme, including where entry is via transfer once enrolled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The entry (admission) requirements for an undergraduate degree programme that includes such study periods abroad should include a relevant language qualification (<i>for example, a department might choose to set a minimum GCSE grade B as the entry requirement</i>) and a requirement once enrolled to have achieved the required language proficiency for participation as advised by Imperial and applied by the department before being able to proceed to the year in which the study abroad takes place. ○ The setting of such an entry (admission) requirement allows a student whose expressed wish is to undertake study abroad in a country where English is not an official language and where CLCC provides language tuition in the language of the host country to have the minimum level of proficiency in order to access (normally from year one) CLCC-

	<p>provided language tuition for degree-credit and/or not-for-degree-credit (<i>depending on how language preparation for study abroad is configured for the relevant degree programme</i>). See Part 3 for further detail on the language tuition provided by CLCC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Therefore, such entry requirements are not normally set for languages that CLCC does not provide tuition in as part of Horizons. However, for degree programmes where movement onto the programme is limited to a transfer once the student is enrolled at Imperial such students may have met relevant language entry requirements when applying initially to Imperial, but regardless the department should discuss each student with CLCC (excluding mother tongue speakers as above) as to how, if at all, a student can enter into further language preparation in the time available. <p>See Part 3 for further detail on the language tuition provided by CLCC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance: Minimum language levels to be achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imperial uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for guiding departments of the language proficiency for participation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level B1 (<i>corresponding to the successful completion of at least Level 3 or above in the appropriate language as taught by the Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication</i>) for a study plan to be undertaken entirely in English. Level B1 (<i>corresponding to the successful completion of at least Level 3 in the appropriate language as taught by CLCC</i>) for a study plan to be undertaken partly or wholly in the official language of the host country. These are minimums. As stated elsewhere it must be the intention of both student and their department to achieve as high a level of proficiency as possible in the time allowed. In addition, where the partner university to which a student might be nominated sets as a condition of entry a higher level of language proficiency then the partner university's condition should be met.
Part 3	<p><u>Tuition provided by CLCC for participation for study placements in a country where English is not an official language:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The normal provider of language tuition would be CLCC. Tuition is limited to those languages which CLCC offer as part of Horizons. Regardless of whether an intended study plan will be undertaken entirely or partly in a language other than English <u>or</u> just in English, the language tuition which is normally available to a student planning to undertake study abroad as part of their degree (<i>via Horizons as either degree-credit and/or not-for-degree-credit depending on how language preparation for study abroad is configured for the relevant degree programme</i>) amounts to 3 hours of contact plus appropriate private study per week) in each of the two years preceding the year in which the study abroad is due to take place. The 3rd hour of contact teaching is ordinarily provided by CLCC through a timetabled "hour" on (normally) Friday. <u>However</u>, a student may, after consultation with their department, opt to undertake language preparation on a private basis. Imperial is under no obligation to assist with the cost of such private tuition.
Part 4	<p><u>Guidance on whether a student has met the language proficiency for participation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the responsibility of a department to decide whether a student has achieved the level of proficiency <u>and</u> to confirm this in writing with the student no later than a week after the exam board for the relevant year has met (as part of the written confirmation that they can progress

	<p>to their study placement abroad) <u>and</u> before progression to the next academic year is notified to Student Records, including any required programme transfer actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Before coming to a decision a department ought to consult with CLCC as necessary, although CLCC may not be able to comment where a student has undertaken language preparation using a non-CLCC route. ▪ A tool for understanding how language qualifications map against CLCC modules is available from CLCC. ▪ Where the level of proficiency (in the language) has yet to be achieved at the time progression to the year abroad is required to be confirmed, a department may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ decide not to confirm progression. ○ agree to supporting actions (upon discussion with the student and, where appropriate, the host university) that support further language development, for example an intensive language course at the host university immediately prior to the start of the actual planned study period and/or attendance at language classes during the planned study period. However, any such requirement will normally be in addition to the study plan to be undertaken at the partner university, unless the department informs the student otherwise. ○ In both cases the decision should be clearly communicated to the student. ▪ The place of ongoing language tuition in the host country (normally at the host university) is an important aspect for a dept to discuss with every student whatever their level of proficiency at the end of the year prior to the year in which the placement take place.
Part 5	<p><u>Other points of guidance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catalonia and Valencia: For study abroad in Catalonia and Valencia the language of preparation should be Spanish. ▪ Curriculum management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The programme specification should state how the level of proficiency can be achieved by way of tuition within the curriculum (<i>degree-credit</i>) and/or alongside the curriculum (<i>not-for-degree-credit including extra-credit</i>). ▪ A department should seek to incorporate use of I-Explore whenever possible. ▪ Depts should ensure that web-prospectus entries are consistent with the programme specification. ▪ Considering access: Where a department relies partly <u>or</u> wholly on a student accessing not-for-degree-credit language tuition options they should be sure they are a.) not going to be disadvantaging any part of their student cohort from participating in study abroad, nor b.) disadvantaging an individual student in terms of the effort required to achieve the desired language proficiency in parallel to fulfilling their degree programme commitments. ▪ CLCC summer term intensive language classes in French, German, Spanish and Italian are normally provided over two days for students planning on being abroad the following academic year. They are free of charge to the student, however, CLCC might ask depts who have students attending to contribute to the cost of running these additional courses.
Part 6	<p><u>Points of contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Placements: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/student-exchanges/undergraduate-year-abroad/ ▪ CLCC: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/languages/year-in-europe/

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