3.8 English Language Statement Policy

3.8.1 Introduction

QQI define an international learner as '*as a person who is not an Irish citizen but is lawfully in the state primarily to receive education and training*'[3] and for whom English is an additional language. They are an individual who is enrolled in the state on a programme leading to an award included within the NFQ or an English language programme, or a learner outside the state enrolled on a programme leading to an award included within the NFQ.

This English Language Statement policy outlines Griffith College's requirements for English language proficiency standards for international learners applying for admission to Griffith College academic programmes. It also describes the supports available to learners to ensure their successful participation.

A range of policies, procedures and processes support the recruitment, admission, enrolment and retention of international learners on/to academic programmes. The documents ensure compliance with national and international standards, and statutory and regulatory requirements, and promote fair, transparent, and consistent processes for admission and ongoing language development. This documentation meets the International Education Mark (IEM) (TrustEd) criteria for ensuring the quality experience for international learners.

Griffith College's academic programmes are delivered through the medium of English, and have specific English Language level requirements for entry to the programme. This requires all learners to have an identified level of proficiency in the English language to enable them to engage and succeed in their chosen programme. In addition to meeting their programme entry requirements learners, whose first language is not English, must also meet the English language requirements specified for their programme.

All English Language Support to learners is provided by the Griffith Institute of Language (GIL), the College's language school. GIL is currently accredited by the Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services (ACELS), which is operated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

GIL provides a range of pre-sessional and in-sessional English Language programmes directed at the needs of international learners – eligible applicants and registered students. Griffith College also provides an NFQ level 5 Special Purpose Certificate in International Foundation Studies (validated by QQI) to support access to College programmes by those international learners who have an insufficient English Language level for programme access, and for learners from countries where the

[3] Refer to QQI's 'Policy on Authorisation to use the International Education Mark' (p.14) for detail on how the definition of an international learner is to be applied for the purpose of the International Education Mark.

secondary school leaving qualification does not allow students to qualify for direct admission into the College's undergraduate programmes.

This policy should be read in conjunction with (and is subject to) the relevant sections of the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual.

3.8.2 Scope

Minimum English language level requirements apply to the following academic programmes delivered by the College:

- All QQI validated programmes
- All programmes leading to BTEC awards
- All programmes leading to awards from Heriot-Watt university

3.8.3 Responsibilities of the College and its Applicants

It is the responsibility of the College, through its admissions, marketing and quality assurance and enhancement teams to ensure that:

i. Information in respect of English language entry requirements is clearly communicated to applicants, partners and agents in advance of any learners being admitted to the College.
ii. The same information in respect of English Language entry requirements is posted on the Griffith College website and all other relevant marketing materials.
iii. Applicants are advised as to the official forms of certification accepted by the College in respect of English language proficiency levels.

It is the responsibility of Applicants to Griffith College, as part of their admissions and registration process, to:

i. Supply the College with official certification of their internationally recognised English Language qualifications
ii. Acknowledge that they understand the designated study path offered by the College
iii. Confirm acceptance of their designated study path, and the associated terms and conditions, by returning a signed Acceptance Reply Form.

3.8.4 Principles

Griffith College's English Language Statement Policy is supported by the Griffith Institute of Language (GIL) and seeks to:

- Ensure a fair and transparent admissions and evaluation process that supports admissions and the integration of international learners to Griffith College.
- Describe Griffith College's policies, processes and quality assurance arrangements to support international applicants in receipt of a conditional offer to study at Griffith College

- Admit and support applicants who meet the required English language standards for academic success creating a diverse, inclusive student body.
- Provide pre-sessional and in-sessional English Language support to help learners improve their English proficiency.
- Establish quality assurance processes for all English language programmes and assessments.
- Griffith College recognises that a student who does not meet the English Language entry requirements cannot be admitted onto a programme of study as they are unlikely to be successful and it is not in the interest of the applicant to do so.

This policy applies to all programmes of study leading to an academic award at postgraduate and undergraduate level as well as certificates and diplomas.

3.8.5 Language Level Standards

All applicants to Griffith College's academic programmes, for whom English is not a first language and who have not been educated through the medium of English, must submit verifiable evidence of the required level of English language proficiency for their intended course of study.

The college uses the Common European Framework Reference of Languages (CEFRL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as the basis for determining the English language level requirements for learners onto its particular programmes. The college also recognises other equivalent international reference frameworks approved by Ireland's Department of Justice for example Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Cambridge suite of exams and other frameworks.

English language proficiency tests scores must be dated within two years of the date of application.

Appendix 22: Comparison Table of English Language Level Equivalences shows the full list of English language reference frameworks accepted by the college, along with their language level equivalences on CEFRL and IELTS as a reference point but is superseded by any updates from the exam providers.

3.8.6 Assessment of English language entry Requirements

The College outlines the English language level required by learners for entry onto its programmes, in accordance with the national standards and criteria set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The English language level is set to ensure that enrolled learners can undertake the programme, confidently participating and engaging with their studies, with a realistic expectation of success.

Minimum language competence levels are applied on a programme-by-programme basis, in line with the level or discipline involved. For example, learners undertaking postgraduate programmes in language intensive programmes such as law and journalism, are normally required to have higher English language levels than learners undertaking undergraduate programmes in the creative arts. Minimum permitted test scores are benchmarked according to the descriptions of language proficiency

contained in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), as appropriate to the programme.

Table 1, below, identifies the English language level requirements for the College's programmes based on the IELTS criteria. It also indicates whether or not Supported Entry applies. Additional equivalency tables in respect of other English language reference frameworks are given in Appendix 22: Comparison Table of English Language Level Equivalences.

Programme	IELTS	Supported Entry
Postgraduate Programmes (NFQ 9)		
Journalism Programmes	7.0 or above (overall) No component below 6.5	N/A
Law Programmes	6.5 or above (overall) No component below 6.0	N/A
All other Postgraduate Programmes	6.5 or above (overall) No component below 6.0	CEFR B2 (IELTS 6) No component below 5.5
Undergraduate Programmes (NFQ 6 to 8)		
Law Programmes	6.5 or above (overall) No component below 6.0	N/A
Journalism Programmes (Stage 1 only)	6.0 or above (overall) No component below 5.5	N/A
Journalism Programmes (Stages 2, 3, or 4)	6.5 or above (overall) No component below 6.0	N/A
Other Programmes (Stage 1 only)	6.0 or above (overall) No component below 5.5	CEFR B2 (IELTS 5.5) No component below 5.0
Other Programmes (Stages 2, 3, or 4)	6.0 or above (overall) No component below 5.5	N/A

Table 1: English Language Level Requirements for admission to Griffith College programmes (postgraduate and undergraduate)

Any recommendations for changes to the levels, bands or sub-scores and concordances of these international English language proficiency tests must be approved by the College's Academic and Professional Council before implementation.

English Language and the CIFS programmes are subject to the same quality assurance and enhancement arrangements as applied to all of the College's academic programmes, as set out in this QAE Manual. Pre-sessional and in-sessional English Language support programmes are not credit-bearing, and are subject to the Griffith Institute of Language quality assurance and enhancement procedures for programme development, delivery and evaluation and subject to an approved English Language external exam.

3.8.7 Language Level Classifications

The College classifies applicants into the following three categories depending on their English language level:

3.8.7.1 **Category 1: Direct Entry Applicant**

These applicants provide official certification of their attainment of the Minimum English language level requirement for the programme at application stage. Learners are eligible to join their preferred programme directly, without any requirement to attend supplementary English language support classes, or to provide evidence of their having further advanced their English language level.

3.8.7.2 **Category 2: Supported Entry Learner**

These applicants provide official certification of their attainment of English language level at application stage. If their level falls into the grade immediately below the minimum grade specified for their preferred programme (for example if they hold a grade of 6.5 on IELTS, rather than the 7.0 grade required to access the programme) then the learner falls into this category. These learners are required to undertake English language support classes, provided by the College, prior to joining the programme, and to continue taking these support language classes while attending the first semester of their programme. The College's schedule of intensive pre-semester and in-semester English language support classes are delivered to 'Supported Entry learners' at no cost to the learner.

Supported Entry learners are required to provide official certification of their attainment of the English language level specified for the programme, before the reach the end of the first semester. They do this by completing an external English language examination and reaching the appropriate grade.

Exceptionally, a Supported Entry learner who has actively engaged in the language support classes and improved their level of English, but falls short of the English language level in the external examination, may be given one further opportunity in the following semester to evidence their attainment of the minimum English language level specified for the programme.

It is a condition of entry to the College's language support programme that a learner's performance on the college's higher education programme will not be considered by an examination board for progression or award purposes until the learner has provided official certification of their attainment of the English language requirement level for the programme. Supported entry is not open to learners enrolling on the College's language-intensive programmes, for example, programmes in Law and Journalism, those on the CIFS NFQ level 5 programmes, or those seeking to access their programme at an advanced stage.

3.8.7.3 **Category 3: Conditional Deferred Entry Applicant**

Learners whose English language level is below that required for either Direct or Supported Entry, but who meet all of the other admissions criteria for their preferred programme may receive a conditional offer letter.

The conditional offer requires the learner's achievement of minimum scores in specified English language proficiency tests entry. They are invited to undertake English language programmes, either with the College or with another provider (and

paying the associated fees). Category 3 learners are not eligible to enrol in any part of the College's higher education programmes until they meet the minimum English language requirements stipulated for the programme (i.e. Category 1) or as a Category 2 learner.

Conditional Deferred Entry learners enrolling on full-time English language programmes with the College, with a view to subsequently progressing onto one of the College's higher education programme, may undertake some of the College's summer full-time language development programmes, or any other English language programme with the associated fee and levels.

The international admission team (Global Engagement Office) has responsibility to provide a written response to all international learners who are refused admission to programmes based on evidence of their English language proficiency.

3.8.8 Appeals

An applicant wishing to appeal the outcome of a deferral application may do so by invoking the College Appeals Procedure in Section F (Document 6.4).

3.8.9 Monitoring and Review

The responsibility for monitoring, review and update of this policy document lies with Griffith Institute of Language in consultation with Quality Assurance and Enhancement Department. The implementation of this policy will be monitored and reported to the APC (Academic and Professional Council).