UCFL Executive: Report from the English Language Teaching [ELT] Representative

British Council study into English Language Tests for HE Admissions

The pandemic saw a proliferation of online English language tests come onto the market, which promised cheap and quick results, but which, on closer investigation, are ill-suited to predict an international student's proficiency in academic literacy in English. Many UK HEIs are now re-considering which tests they accept for admissions after several universities have had quite negative experiences with some of these tests, with several cases of the students having been admitted on the basis of such tests either failing of dropping out due to a lack of linguistic proficiency.

Whilst every few years the UK government invites English language test providers to apply to have their tests accredited as SELTs, so Secure English Language Tests, there is no independent body that regulates or oversees the expanding range of English language tests on the market.

The British Council has therefore initiated a research collaboration together Cambridge University Press and Assessment, and the universities of Dundee and Cambridge, to publish a guidance document and run a series of workshops for higher education institutions on how to choose a suitable proficiency test from those currently on offer, including what they assess, what they don't assess, what levels might be best suited for undergraduate and/or postgraduate entry, their global availability, their accessibility, and of course, their security.

Higher education institutions will, of course, make their own decisions as to which tests they accept and why and at which levels – but with many more players coming onto the market and many more online opportunities having been opened up due the necessitated move to online during the pandemic, the aim of this research study is to assist in making these decisions more *informed* decisions.

Interim updates on the research study will be published both on the Project website (https://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/adtis/project/index.html) and more formally in academic journals.

Changes to visa regulations

From 1 January 2024 only international students doing a PhD, a RQF level 8 course, or a research-based higher degree are able to bring dependants with them. This means that students on taught Master's programmes will no longer be eligible to do so. This will affect, in particular, such post-experience courses as MBAs etc. In a related matter, Universities UK has also recently published its response to the Migration Advisory Committee's *Rapid Review of the Graduate Route*.

Directions in EAP: BALEAP SIG looking at EMI/EME & Universities UK: Transnational Education Conference

EMI (English Medium Instruction) and EME (English Medium Education) were initially the domain of such countries as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. But over the last 15 years, there has been a significant expansion of such provision, mainly at PG level, to many other countries. China is notably the only non-EU country that currently offers such provision at UG level. Such provision offers students the opportunity to be taught through the medium of English, but without the associated costs of applying to study in the Big Four (US, UK, Canada, Australia). Several UK universities also engage in a version of this in that they have overseas campuses, such as Nottingham and its campus in Ningbo. BALEAP has recently established a new SIG to explore EMI/EME and Universities UK will be hosting a conference on transnational education later this year.

ELTSU at University of Winchester

Staff at the English Language Teaching & Support Unit (ELTSU) at the University of Winchester were notified at the end of February that the University planned to close the unit down. Consultations are still ongoing with the ELTSU staff, the unions, and the university.

As a recently re-appointed External Examiner for ELTSU, I have sought to gain clarification from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sarah Greer, as to the rationale for the proposed closure, but to no avail. Either the University has decided to no longer accept international students whose first language is not English or the University still intends to admit international students whose first language is not English, but will no longer provide any tailored support for them.