English for academic mobility (outgoings)

A. Preparing for academic mobility

If you wish to study or do research at a foreign university (academic mobility), you need to plan well in advance: The foreign university you choose to go to (your host university) will likely have strict requirements regarding your English language level. As you will most likely attend courses and/or do research in English, strong English language skills will also help you take full advantage of your time abroad.

As soon as you have decided to study abroad, you should get a clear picture of your English language skills. There are several tools to help you assess your level, e.g. the Dialang test (https://dialangweb.lancaster.ac.uk), the self-assessment grid of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/self-assessment-grid), and the Council of Europe’s Language Passport (https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/).

You should also check the English language requirements of your host university – most universities make their requirements easily accessible on their websites. You will usually have to provide formal proof of your level of English, and how you need to do this will depend on the university you are applying to.

There are several options for providing proof of your English language level, and we list these below. However, each university has its own rules, and you should find out early which option(s) are accepted by your host university in order to avoid delays or refusal of a place at your chosen university.

1. **Your English level is C1 or above. You have an official certificate proving this (TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge Advanced or Proficiency, or other). Your host university accepts your certificate.**

   Many universities (though not all) require C1-level English. If your level is C1 or above and you have an official certificate that is accepted by your host university, you do not need to take further action. However, please note that TOEFL and IELTS tests are only valid for two years.

2. **Your English level is C1 or above. You do not have a current valid certificate accepted by your host university. You have recently completed, or are currently enrolled in, a Language Center English course.**

   If your level is C1 or above but you do not have a valid certificate, your host university may accept a form signed by an English lecturer who is in a position to confirm your level of English. Some universities have downloadable forms that your lecturer can sign. The Language Center also has a form that you can request from your lecturer. However, you must have recently completed – or be currently enrolled in – an English language course with one of our lecturers. We do not provide a free assessment and validation service. We do, however, offer an English assessment test; to take this assessment, you should enroll via our website. This test costs CHF 140 (DAAD candidates) or CHF 200 (other candidates). For more information, see below.

3. **Your English level is B2 or above. You have not taken a Language Center English course recently. You don't have a valid certificate, but you need one.**

   **Inform yourself**

   Find out which certificates your host university will accept. Inform yourself about the amount of work each option would involve, and prepare early. The Language Center runs preparation 7-week courses for TOEFL and IELTS (several each semester). The focus of these courses is to familiarize candidates with the course format, show them what the examiners are looking for, and improve their general test-taking skills. Your English level should be at least B2 to take one of these courses, as there is a limit to how much you can improve your English in a 7-week course. We do not offer preparation courses for Cambridge Advanced and Proficiency.
Get help
If you are unsure about your next step, you can request a language consultation with the Head of English (email the Secretariat at englisch@sprachen.uzh.ch).

IELTS or TOEFL
Find out which of the two exams suits you best. We have prepared some information to help you decide: (www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/angebot/sprachen/pdf/TOEFLorIELTS15.pdf). There is also a wealth of information online (e.g., https://www.ielts.org, https://www.ets.org/toefl). You can then decide whether you want to enroll in one of our 7-week TOEFL or IELTS preparation courses, or alternatively you might choose to prepare on your own. Our Self-Access Centers (http://www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/slz/) have a good range of materials for this.

English Assessment Test by the Language Center
The Language Center offers two types of assessment tests, one specifically for DAAD candidates (light version), and one for all others (full version). Both versions include exercises that test your reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. For DAAD candidates: The light version for DAAD candidates is slightly shorter because it excludes the three grammar and vocabulary exercises that are included in the full version. This test takes 75 minutes and costs CHF 140. For all other candidates: The test takes 90 minutes and costs CHF 200.

At the end of the test, you will receive a certificate with an assessment (B1-C2 on the Common European Framework Reference for Languages) of each separate part of the test (reading, writing, speaking, listening), plus an overall assessment.

NB: The English assessment test is not an easy option. It is designed mainly for mobility candidates who are under time pressure to provide proof of their level of English. In most cases, we advise that candidates prepare for and take a TOEFL or IELTS test.

Where do I take the TOEFL or IELTS test?
The Language Center is not a testing center for any English language tests. If you need to take an external test, you will need to enroll in and pay for the test independently. If you take one of our IELTS or TOEFL preparation courses, your lecturer will discuss this in class. For more information on test dates and locations for IELTS and TOEFL, go to https://www.ielts.org or https://www.ets.org/toefl, respectively.

4. Your level is below B2.
If your level is below B2, you might need to take courses over several semesters to reach the level required for a student exchange. If you need help deciding which courses to take to improve your English, you can request a language consultation with the Head of English (email the Secretariat at englisch@sprachen.uzh.ch).

B. Your host university’s language requirements
The entry requirements for exchange students and researchers at foreign universities are determined independently by each university, and in some cases, the requirements differ from department to department within a single university. The most frequently accepted tests are IELTS and TOEFL, although the passing grade (the test results they require) also vary from university to university. Many universities also accept Cambridge Advanced Certificate (CAE) and/or Cambridge Proficiency (CPE). Pearson Academic (PTE) is also on some universities’ list of accepted certificates.

Please note that the Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich is not able to advise you on the English language requirements of specific foreign universities. Most universities make this information easily accessible on their website, and you should be able to find out quickly which certificates and which grades are accepted by your host university.
C. Language Center courses for academic mobility
The Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich offers several 7-week preparation courses for IELTS and TOEFL each semester. A preparation course for the GRE General Test (https://www.ets.org/gre) is also offered each semester. These courses are designed to familiarize you with the course format, show you specifically what the examiners are looking for, and help you to improve your test-taking skills. For this reason, your English level should be at least B2 to attend such a course.

The Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich does not offer preparation courses for Cambridge Advanced and Proficiency tests. There are a large number of local private organizations that do, however, and you will find these online.

Self-study materials
Self-study materials for various tests are available at the Language Center’s Self-Access Centers (located at Zentrum and Hönggerberg, www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/slz).

Contact details

Dr Michelle Norgate
Head of English
Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich
Email: michelle.norgate@sprachen.uzh.ch
Ph: +41 (0)44 634 52 87

Veronika Heinz
Secretariat
Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich
Email: englisch@sprachen.uzh.ch
Ph: +41 (0)44 634 52 89