

MPW Cambridge

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Policy

Context

MPW Cambridge admits approximately 40-50 students a year (30-35% of total student body) whose first language is not English, be they recruited directly from overseas or those who have for a number of years been educated in the British educational system.

The overall purpose of MPW's ESOL provision is to enable such students to attain a level of English sufficient to support them in their GCSE and A-level studies, to improve students' use of English as a whole and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to prepare them to sit the IELTS test, which most UK universities stipulate as an entrance requirement in addition to A-levels for overseas students.

Aims

- to work with the College Senior Management Team (SMT) to identify needs, implement strategies and monitor progress with specific regard to language acquisition and use
- to foster good practice in terms of teaching and pastoral support to ensure the needs of ESOL students are catered for
- to contribute as far as possible to the inclusion and active participation of ESOL students (as well as other non-native speaker of English students who do not require ESOL – see 'definition' below) in the mainstream academic and extracurricular provision of the college
- to ensure that the quality of ESOL students' spoken and written English is not an impediment to securing academic qualifications commensurate with their abilities
- to achieve the best and most consistent (i.e. across 4 skills sections) possible score in IELTS
- to encourage discourse amongst the wider teaching staff body aiming to integrate work done in ESOL lessons with that done in other subjects
- to build and maintain a bank of resources to support learning provision

Definition of ESOL Students at MPW Cambridge

ESOL students at MPW Cambridge are those whose first language is not English and are diagnosed as needing additional support in English in order for them to pursue their studies effectively.

The ESOL Support Team

The ESOL activities of the college are coordinated by David Shah, Head of ESOL and Director of Studies, very much in active partnership with the other staff involved in delivering ESOL in class: Sally Guyer (also Accommodation & Welfare Officer) and David Ball (part-time ESOL Tutor and active IELTS Examiner). All the tutors concerned with the delivery of IELTS teaching have appropriate qualifications and substantial experience of this specialist area of teaching.

Identification, Assessment and Monitoring of ESOL Students

Identification, and Assessment

Students requiring ESOL support are identified in a number of ways. Students recruited from overseas are given English diagnostic tests in their country of origin at the point of recruitment, as well as being interviewed, if these interviews do not take place directly in Cambridge. The tests are in reading and writing, with the former being based on IELTS materials; students' speaking and listening competence is assessed during the interviews.

As part of our regular admissions interviews in Cambridge, any potential students who have not already provided recognised evidence of academic English ability (e.g. GCSE or IGCSE English Language pass grades or IELTS scores considered to meet the threshold for Year 10/11, 12 or 13 entry, respectively) are required to sit an ESOL diagnostic test before the offer of a place is made or

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before an academic programme is determined. On rarer occasions, enrolled students may be identified as needing language support by their subject tutors or by their Personal Tutors or other SMT members. Some students may request language support themselves during the course of their studies.

Currently, of the non-native speaker of English students recruited overseas or from existing UK education, with few exceptions all take ESOL lessons from arrival at MPW Cambridge. The exceptions are those who, as previously mentioned, have taken already and passed English Language GCSE (C grade pass or above) or IGCSE (A*-B grade pass) or have an overall IELTS band score of 6.5 or above (including a minimum of 7 in Writing) on entry. These official IELTS scores also become the pre-requisite for a student choosing to drop ESOL tuition, although many choose to continue until they have reached the IELTS targets required as part of their university applications/conditional offers (such targets often including an overall score of 7 for the more competitive university courses and, increasingly, similar minimum scores in all 4 IELTS skills sections).

Monitoring

ESOL students are monitored formally (i.e. as opposed to the on-going, informal class based assessment and feedback) through a series of 'milestone' tests during the course of their studies at MPW Cambridge. These begin with an IELTS based start of academic year diagnostic test intended both as a more in-depth assessment of relative English language strengths/weaknesses and as an initial familiarisation (or re-familiarisation) with the IELTS testing framework and criteria.

As part of the wider college provision, Year 12 and 13 ESOL students then sit weekly out of class 1 hour Timed Assignments (Years 10/11 once per half-term), set and marked by their ESOL tutor. In-house IELTS mock tests (covering all 4 skills sections) are held as a mandatory exercise for all ESOL students on the penultimate Saturday of the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms, respectively. Other than in exceptional cases (e.g. students deemed to be up to the target IELTS standard earlier in the academic year), the college default date for a full, external IELTS test (normally held at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge) is at the end of the Spring Term. This allows for the in-house mock test to take place first, also allows for later retakes where necessary and avoids clashes with the main GCSE/A-level exam session in the Summer Term.

As part of all the above mentioned tests, progress is closely monitored in the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening and relevant targets are set by the respective ESOL tutors in the new cycle which will lead to the next test/assessment. As already mentioned, ESOL students are, of course, also monitored by their subject tutors on an ongoing basis in terms of class participation, quality of homework and performance in tests.

Types of Support Available

ESOL lessons

Our standard ESOL programme consists of six hours per week. The ESOL courses aim in the main to cover three specific yet interdependent strands, namely: specific IELTS test learning, practice and feedback; English language skills improvement largely based on a set course book (usually IELTS preparation related); and more generic language activities ranging from discussions and role plays to the reading or viewing of cultural/current affairs material, again with resulting follow-up discussion.

The overall approach is communicative and supportive, with an emphasis on the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Building up and consolidating students' vocabulary banks, as well as aiming for a more complete understanding and application of grammar are also significant areas. Language support for other subjects is an important, if more pragmatic aspect of the ESOL lessons. Students are encouraged to bring language related queries from other subjects with which they need

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help. GCSE/A-level subject tutors liaise with the ESOL tutors so that the teaching of subject specific vocabulary and writing skills pertinent to particular subjects can be potentially integrated into ESOL (usually IELTS Writing specific) lessons.

Part of lesson time may also be from time to time used for the dissemination and explanation of material pertinent to the students' academic and welfare, issuing and explaining news about the college, help with the UCAS process and/or the writing of curriculum vitae.

Individual tuition

Some students may be dealt with on an individual basis, rather than as part of a group programme. These lessons may be arranged at the request of subject tutors, students themselves or parents and guardians via the relevant Personal Tutor. Such one-to-one tuition is generally rarer (much help is already afforded by ESOL and Personal Tutors outside class time) and targeted at a short-term objective, such as an IELTS test or university admissions interview.

Cultural enrichment activities

The multi-cultural background of the college allows our ESOL students to broaden their knowledge of and relationship to other groups, including the many home students, and the ESOL as well as other Personal and subject tutors actively encourage such interaction. There is usually a wide mixture of nationalities. Such interaction further encourages ESOL students to find out more about and to mix with other language groups, something that is necessarily done in and of benefit to their English. To this end, the college has organised well-attended (by both home and overseas students as well as staff) a number of social events such as May Balls and International Evenings (one usually coinciding with the Chinese New Year).

MPW Cambridge ESOL students have the opportunity to be involved in a limited number of extra-curricular activities arranged for college students, such as cultural, sporting and community activities. As ESOL students progress through the College, they are encouraged to become more integrated; this may often take the form of a natural progression as they get to know their non-ESOL peers better through class and friendship groups, but such progression is actively promoted by Personal and subject tutors as well as wider college staff.

English Speaking Policy

It should also be mentioned that, in addition to such incentives, a degree of deterrence is used with regard to encouraging non-native speaker of English students to habitually use English as their main college 'working' language, as opposed to their mother tongue (the latter being more of a risk and, therefore, a hindrance to ESOL/IELTS progress of the larger minority groups such as Chinese students). This is enshrined in the actively pursued English Language Policy quoted as follows from the current Guidelines for Students, under the heading '*International students must aim to speak English at all times in the college*':

"Students who are non-native speakers of English (in other words, those who have other mother-tongue languages), whether they are timetabled as ESOL students or not, must aim to speak English in college at all times, the only exceptions being when tutors or other members of staff consider it to be necessary and reasonable for them not to do so. Our intention here is to ensure a healthy English linguistic habit is developed by all international students in order to aid their academic progress (including good IELTS results) and help them make a wider circle of friends both at and outside the college.

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International students should note that, where a member of staff does consider the use of another language than English to be unreasonable, the student will be issued a verbal 'friendly warning' which will be referred to the relevant Personal Tutor. If a student receives three such warnings, they will be asked by their Personal Tutor to come into college on the next available Saturday morning for an 'Extra English' session (e.g. part of an IELTS practice test)."

Pastoral support

There is an understanding that overseas students are often confronted with a different set of problems to deal with than many of our other MPW Cambridge students. There should be some awareness that there may be an element of pastoral support involved, in conjunction with the relevant Personal Tutor and the afore-mentioned Accommodation & Welfare Officer, since many ESOL students may be living, at least initially, in unfamiliar circumstances in Cambridge.

Special Examination Access Arrangements

ESOL students who have been in the UK less than two years are allowed extra time in GCSE/A-level examinations in order to use bi-lingual dictionaries, as well as having an added 25% extra-time exam concession. Students are informed that they have to report to the Exams Officer with their passports showing their date of first entry to the UK at the start of the academic year (as prompted to do so on College Induction Day). Bi-lingual dictionaries in such cases are provided by the college and are only available to those students who have officially received this and the extra-time concession

Inset

Members of the ESOL team aim to keep abreast of developments and best practice in their field, by sharing ideas on a regular basis, by regular meetings with the Director of Studies with responsibility for ESOL (departmental meetings usually once per term and one during summer recess) and by reviewing materials on a regular basis.

All staff receive regular updates on students who have special needs together with details of areas of concern for each student they teach and possible ways of helping these students. They are also provided with general information on the special needs they will encounter. Opportunities for professional development occur in various ways throughout the academic year. This may involve an individual member of staff attending an INSET course held outside college or a wider staff audience may be reached through sessions organised in College.

Resources

A central bank of teaching resources for the ESOL teaching team is held in the main Director of Studies' office (Room 12), with additional resources being held in the Head of ESOL's office (Room 16) and the official main ESOL class room (Room 1). All such resources are easily accessible to all members of the ESOL teaching team.

Review

The provision for ESOL is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Head of ESOL/Director of Studies David Shah, again very much in conjunction with the other two members of the ESOL teaching team. In the lead up to the end of the summer term, the ESOL activities of the current academic year are reviewed as part of a departmental meeting (others occurring at least once per term earlier in the year) and practice/policy is reviewed and (where necessary/agreed) updated for the year ahead.. The data for this is drawn from a range of sources including:

- student and parent/guardian feedback

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- the academic progress of students needing language support
- IELTS performances of the same students
- feedback from SMT, Personal Tutors and GCSE/A-level subject tutors
- more general/social feedback concerning the overseas students' integration.

Other relevant documents

- Guidelines for Students and Tutors (current year's issue)
- Admissions policy
- ESOL Schemes of Work
- ESOL Policy – Introductory Information for Tutors