

IRC English Language Competency Assessment Policy

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Policy Owner:	Training Working Group
Description:	As part of the Irish Red Cross accreditation to use PHECC Clinical Practice Guidelines it is recognised that English language competence must be assured where English is not a member’s first language.
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1.1	24.06.2013	Tom Horwell	
2.0	23.05.2023	David Treacy	updated in response to increased linguistic diversity in Ireland, updated assessment forms
2.1	01.07.2024	National Training Officer	Version control and standardised formatting added

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Introduction

This policy is updated in response to increased linguistic diversity in Ireland, and in the present and potential membership of the Irish Red Cross of persons for whom English is an additional Language (EAL).

Purpose

As part of the Irish Red Cross accreditation to use PHECC Clinical Practice Guidelines it is recognised that English language competence must be assured where English is not a member's first language. While recognising that language acquisition is not a role of the IRC, this policy outlines the steps required to ensure competence in the English language so that members can interpret the CPGs and provide care safely.

Scope

This policy will cover both practitioners and all IRC members who have access to PHECC CPG's and will use them to deliver treatment to patients on behalf of the IRC, and who may be required to conduct patient handovers to Emergency Department staff. Responsibility for compliance with this policy rests with the Unit Officer in charge of the unit of which the person being assessed is a member.

Related procedures and processes

There are a number of methods for assessing English language competence

1. Candidates undergoing assessment in English language competence may undertake one of the following independent tests:
 - a. TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language)
 - b. IELTS (international English language testing system)
2. TOEFL & IELTS are independent, internationally recognised tests that may be taken by the candidate at a number of international and national locations. These tests evaluate student ability to use English in an academic or professional context, and have four components ; reading, listening, speaking and writing. Information on these tests are available on the following websites: www.tefl.com (TOEFL) and www.ielts.org (IELTS)
3. The candidate is responsible for making the appropriate arrangements and for any costs incurred. Results may then be presented to the Unit Officer who will return same to the National Training Support Manager in Head Office.
4. Candidates will need to achieve a minimum score of 6.5 on the IELTS exam to be eligible to attend Red Cross training course(s). (See Appendix 1 for IELTS Band Scores) Candidates may also chose to undertake the TOEFL test. Candidates who undertake this course will need to achieve a score of 80 or higher to be eligible to attend Red Cross training course(s). (See Appendix 2 for TOEFL Test Scores)
5. An alternative method of assessment may be carried out by a qualified English teacher, experienced with EAL, and a PHECC Tutor using recognised assessments, as in the EAL Post-Primary Assessment Kit. The results of this assessment will be given to the Unit Officer and



returned to the National Training Officer in Head Office using the Assessment Form (Appendix 3) This Assessment Kit is based on the council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for languages (ECRF), which corresponds to the 3 proficiency levels, (1,2,3) used by the Department of Education. (See Appendix 3). A placement in the D (Competent / Diversifying) or E (Fluent) bands is necessary.

6. A Panel of recognised teachers and Tutors will be established on a Regional basis and will be held by the RDU. The RDU will be contacted by the relevant ADU to organise this assessment.

Reference to any external sources that are useful or relevant

Appendix 1 - IELTS Banding

Appendix 2 - TOEFL Test Scoring

Appendix 3 - Use of the ECFR English Language proficiency

Appendix 1 - IELTS Banding

1. There is no pass or fail in IELTS. Candidates are graded on their performance, using scores from 1 to 9 for each part of the test – Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.
2. The results from the four parts then produce an Overall Band Score. This unique 9-band system measures scores in a consistent manner – wherever and whenever the test is taken.
3. It is internationally recognised and understood, giving you a reliable international currency. IELTS scores have a recommended validity period of two years.
4. The IELTS 9-band scale Each band corresponds to a level of English competence. All parts of the test and the Overall Band Score can be reported in whole and half bands, eg 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0.

Band 9: Expert user: has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

Band 8: Very good user: has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacy. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Band 7: Good user: has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacy and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally, handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Band 6: Competent user: has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacy and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

Band 5: Modest user: has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Band 4: Limited user: basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

Band 3: Extremely limited user: conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

Band 2: Intermittent user: no real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

Band 1: Non-user: essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words. Band 0: Did not attempt the test: No assessable information provided.

Appendix 2 – TOEFL Test Scoring

1. TOEFL iBT® Test Scores Your scores are based on your performance on the questions in the test. You must answer at least one question each in the Reading and Listening sections, write at least one essay, and complete at least one Speaking task to receive an official score.
2. For the TOEFL iBT® test, administered via the Internet, you will receive four scaled section scores and a total score:

Reading Section (Score of: 0–30)

Listening Section (Score of: 0–30)

Speaking Section (Score of: 0–30)

Writing Section (Score of: 0–30)

Total Score (0–120)

3. In addition to your scores, your official score record also includes performance feedback that is a reflection of your performance level and a description of the kinds of tasks that test takers within the reported score range can typically do. There is no passing or failing TOEFL® score; individual higher education institutions and agencies set their own score requirements. TOEFL scores are valid for two years after the test date and there is no limit

Appendix 3. Use of the ECFR English Language proficiency

1. Use of the ECFR English Language proficiency is represented by 5 proficiency bands described as :
 - A. New to English
 - B. Beginners B. Early Acquisition
 - C. C. Developing competency
 - D. Expanding D. Competent
 - E. Diversification E.

Fluent Relevant materials can be found at the following link: https://ncca.ie/media/3306/eal-fv_1.pdf



Assessment of English Language Competency

Name	
Membership Number	
Address	
Date	

Please complete either Section 1 or Section 2 below.

Section 1

Have you taken the TOEFL or IELTS examination in English? Yes No

What score did you achieve? TOEFL or IELTS _____

Section 2

This section of the form must be completed and signed by a qualified English teacher and a PHECC tutor. This person should be able to comment on your English language competency.

Referee: Please tick the box below which you feel best describes the above-named applicant's competency in English.

Tick	Band	User	Description
	6	Expert	Full operational command of the English language: ability to speak, write and understand spoken and written
	5	Good User	Operational command of the English: ability to speak, write and understand spoken and written English with occasional inaccuracies and misunderstanding in some situations.
	4	Competent User	Effective command of English language: ability to speak, write and understand spoken and written English particularly in familiar situations.
	3	Limited User	Limited command of English language; experience some difficulty in speaking English and understanding spoken and written English.
	2	Intermittent User	Extremely limited communication skills
	1	Non User	No ability to use the English language beyond a few isolated words



Referee		Date	
Relationship to applicant		Contact telephone number	

Declaration by Applicant:

I declare that the information given by me on this form is true and accurate.

Signed

Date

Section 3 (For use only by the Unit Officer)

Name (block capitals)		Membership Number	
Signed			
Date			
Irish Red Cross Area			