Test of English at Matriculation Test (TEAM)

The TEAM test is a diagnostic test administered at matriculation by the Institute of Applied Languages for postgraduate students entering study at the University. It tests the student’s ability in English language: listening; grammar and vocabulary, and assesses whether the student would benefit from further tuition in any or all of these areas. The test lasts approximately 40 minutes. The test is recommended for all students who have presented an IELTS certificate below 7.0 (below 100iBT-TOEFL, below 600 TOEFL, or below 250 CBT-TOEFL).

The student will receive their results by email (copied to the Programme Director). The University will regard specific ELTT courses as essential or strongly recommended for students with low test scores. All ELTT courses are provided by the University free of charge to students who have undertaken TEAM tests.

The attached paper from Bruce Gittings (School of GeoSciences) sets out some of the advantages to Schools in requiring such tests. To this may be added the advantage to the College if the tests were managed such that there was: monitoring of the numbers of students requiring such tests; the recommendations arising from the test (and hence the implications for appropriateness of the minimum level of English required for entry); and whether students undertook and completed the courses recommended (and hence whether any poor academic performance could be attributed to a student’s not engaging with the support offered.)

It is proposed that:

- Taking a TEAM test is not a condition of entry in the College of Science and Engineering and is not part of the formal assessment process for award however the TEAM test is regarded as ‘strongly recommended’ for all PG taught students who are classed as overseas or EU arriving for study on masters or diploma programmes and have submitted a English language test of IELTS certificate below 7.0 (or below 100iBT-TOEFL, below 600 TOEFL, or below 250 CBT-TOEFL).

- Awareness of the test and benefits is increased in all induction material provided by Schools and the College Office

- Schools ensure that time for the test is incorporated in the Induction programme (frequent test sessions are run in Freshers week and first week of semester but test sessions are available throughout the year)

- Students are required to inform the TO when they have taken the test
• TO should discuss the results with all students who are given ‘essential’ or ‘strongly recommended’ for courses to ensure that the students understand the risks and possible consequences of not completing the recommended courses

• TO will be required to report to the College Office annual statistics of eligibility, attendance and completion of courses

• Schools may also operate this procedure for any additional student for whom they think that this test may be of benefit
Appendix A

Requiring TEAM Tests

A Discussion Paper for the Postgraduate Studies Committee of the College of Science & Engineering

Until changes in the matriculation arrangements a few years ago, there was a tick-box on matriculation forms whereby the Director of a Masters Programme could require a student to take a TEAM test before they could matriculate. This mechanism was used by several Programme Directors as a means of requiring all Masters' students whose native language was not English to take a consistent English test.

The use of the TEAM test in this way, especially at the very beginning of an intensive Master's programme, where English language is an absolute key to success, had enormous advantages. Even where a student has a good English score on paper, the process of getting used to British English and our regional accents cannot be underestimated. TEAM has the great benefit of being test administered in Edinburgh, to a known and well-understood standard, giving a view of English capabilities unbiased by foreign, cultural or other factors.

The TEAM triggers letters to both student and Programme Director, containing clear recommendations and giving access to remedial courses at no cost to the student. The Director is therefore in a very strong position to be able to require the student to take these remedial actions to their own benefit, and ensure that the University is protected against later charges of inaction or unfairness.

There were two possible problems with this mechanism; namely the heavy load it placed on IALS to test all of these students and the delays before students could matriculate, which brought problems with accessing resources and events early in the programme.

That said, this paper appeals for the restoration of a compulsory TEAM test (or at least a means for Programme Directors / Directors of Studies to require such a test should they so wish) and that appropriate resourcing be made available to IALS to run these tests very early in the academic year. While it is not necessary for matriculation to be held up for this test, some centrally-managed means of recording attendance and a fast and responsive method of chasing up non-attendance is undoubtedly required. It would seem beneficial that this be a central function, rather than a system having to be maintained by individual Schools.

(This paper was written particularly in the context of Master’s programmes, where timescales are sufficiently tight that a student can already have jeopardised their performance within two or three weeks of the start. For example, from the perspective of the MSc in Geographical Information Science in the School of GeoSciences, the first degree-assessed work is submitted in the first week of Semester One and therefore any time available for acclimatisation is minimal. The College of Science & Engineering Postgraduate Studies Committee discussed this paper and gave it support, while recognising the level of compulsion may be less important for PhD-track research students.)

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