



English for academic mobility (outgoings)

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://coe.int/en/web/portfolio/the-language-passport>).

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.

Your language level

- Your English level is C1 or above. You already have an official certificate proving this (TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge Advanced or Proficiency, or other). Your host university accepts your certificate. Please note that some universities specify how long they consider language certificates to be valid. TOEFL and IELTS certificates are often deemed valid for 2 years.**

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.

- 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 205, and you can register for it through our website.*

- 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.**

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 7-week preparation courses for TOEFL and IELTS and 14-week courses for Cambridge C1 Advance and Cambridge C2 Proficiency exams – see our website for more information. 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 B2.2 to take one of these courses.

- 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).

Additional information

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: (https://www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:a1b0148d-8592-49ae-8f53-63ca5942d7eb/TOEFL-or-IELTS_20230206.pdf). There is also a wealth of information online (e.g. <https://www.ielts.org>, <https://www.ets.org/toefl>). Our Self-Access Centers (<http://www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch/slz>) also have a good range of materials.

English Assessment Test by the Language Center

The Language Center's English Assessment tests your reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. It takes around 75 minutes and costs CHF 205. On completion, 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, plus an overall assessment.

NB: The English assessment test is not an easy option. It is designed mainly for students who have missed deadlines for other tests and need proof of their English skills urgently. In most cases, we advise that candidates prepare well in advance and take an official English test that they know is accepted by their host university (usually a TOEFL, IELTS, or Cambridge test).

Where do I take my chosen 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 test preparation courses, your lecturer will discuss this in class. For more information on test dates and locations for IELTS, TOEFL, or Cambridge tests, see their websites.

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, TOEFL, and Cambridge C1 Advanced/C2 Proficiency. The test results or grades required also varies from university to university.

The Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich cannot advise you on the English language requirements of specific 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.

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).

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