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Registrar

(Title of Item)

Entry requirements for Chinese Students: English Language Proficiency

Submitted to Academic Council 06-03-15

Action requested: Approval

Background rationale

Entry regulations with respect to English language proficiency are currently set around IELTS or equivalent proficiency test and alternatively following successful completion of the UCC Summer School programme in Zhengzhou. This has occasionally been flexed in individual cases.

During a recent visit, our main agents in China, the China Office and several of our key partners in China indicated that UCC is losing out in competition with universities from other countries by sticking rigidity to an effective IELTS only entry (especially to universities in USA, Australia and New Zealand), that there is now such huge demand for IELTS examinations that students have to wait 3 months or more before they can even take a test, and that many of the top (211/965) Chinese universities are running their own English assessments which are accepted by top international universities for entry. It is therefore timely to reconsider the entry regulations relating to English proficiency to allow a more flexible approach whilst ensuring sufficient language ability.

The document was endorsed by Academic Board on 11th February 2015, and is now before Academic Council for final approval.

Alignment to Strategic Objectives/External Policy Driver

Internationalisation and student recruitment

Resource Implications

Positive

Brief description / summary of the item

The following proposal is to extend our entry regulations re IELTS requirements to allow for a more flexible approach for the admission of Chinese students whilst ensuring sufficient language ability. The proposal is being made following a recent visit to China during which our main agents, the China Office and key university partners made clear that we are losing out in competition with universities from other countries by sticking rigidity to an effective IELTS-only entry (especially USA, Australia and New Zealand). It was also pointed out that there is now such huge demand for IELTS examinations in China that the majority of students have to wait 3 months or more before they can even take a test, and that many of the top (211/965) Chinese universities are running their own English assessments which are accepted by top international universities for entry.

Currently we have three entry routes:

- IELTS 6/6.5 (or TOEFL equivalent) depending on discipline;
- successful completion of the UCC/Tengda Summer School in China;
- occasionally an ad hoc acceptance where clear evidence of sufficient English proficiency for a specific subject has been demonstrated and a special application is accepted.

It is proposed to add the following four additional entry routes:

1. English language proficiency equivalent to an IELTS 6 or 6.5 (as required by the programme) as vouched for by a 211/965 partner university through their own assessment tests (e.g. South China Normal, Shanghai University, ECPL, Jinan, Dalian, NUE etc). The list of such universities can be agreed.

2. For students from other partner universities, a successful China English Test (CET) at level/band 6 with a score of 500/710 or higher. A score of 520 or higher is required for students to undertake a further optional spoken test. Students who have not taken such a spoken test should be considered for an interview by skype or in person by academic staff from the relevant academic unit at UCC such that the staff can vouch or otherwise for the sufficiency of language to allow the student to properly engage with the subject at UCC.

The CET is a national English language proficiency test in the People's Republic of China aimed at ensuring that undergraduate students and postgraduate students in China reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabuses (NCETS). This test has

existed in China for 26 years and has a test population of some 18 million people annually. The CET is mandatory for university students in China who are not English majors. It is also a prerequisite for a bachelor's degree and many employers in China prefer applicants with CET certification. Students are expected to achieve a Band 4 to graduate and Band 6 is further voluntary test (the next and final Band is 8). The CET is held twice yearly and last 125 minutes with a total possible score of 710. The structure of the examination involves listening (/249 – 35%), reading and comprehension (/249 – 35%), Error correction (/70 – 10%) and writing and translation (/142 – 20%). Students admitted through this route should also be expected to undertake English language training at our Language Centre prior to and / or during their studies and be encouraged to take relevant IELTS tests.

3. A similar but more rigorous test, the Test for English Majors (TEM), is mandatory for undergraduate English majors and passing the TEM-4 is a graduation requirement. The test is normally taken by the end of the second academic year. A TEM-4 should be considered acceptable for admittance to UCC.

4. Additionally where students have previously taken and successfully completed a semester or year or 2+2 degree at UCC, we should waive English requirements for postgraduate courses as the students have already demonstrated their ability.

PSG 8-2-2015