

## Language Policy UvA, GSSS regulations and admission procedure GSSS 2024

At the UvA, we have a language policy with several dimensions, one of which is language proficiency upon admittance. The UvA has an expert group on admission (including language issues) that periodically discusses elements of admissions, including English (and Dutch) language test scores, comparison of scores, and the list of (Bachelor's) degrees in countries that grant an 'automatic' exemption to submitting a proof of English language proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Master's admission is dealt with at the level of each Master's programme (by the Admissions Committee), all GSSS programmes obviously comply with UvA's language policy framework regarding the tests accepted, the scores required and the general exemptions. This includes the exemption granted to graduates of Bachelor's degrees of certain countries/regions.

The rules for English proficiency in the GSSS admissions procedure are, in short, the following:

- Students need to have a certain English proficiency to study successfully.
- Checking each person's English skills with an individual assessment would be fair, but also unfeasible for the GSSS Admissions Office in terms of time and cost. Thus, we work with the following internationally recognized certificates: TOEFL, IELTS and Cambridge.
- Dutch law exempts graduates from Dutch academic bachelor's degrees from needing to submit separate test results;
- Students who have graduated from an entirely English taught Bachelor's degree are in principle deemed proficient enough. The big question is: how to go about identifying those degrees? (see below for further elaboration);
- There are some other grounds based upon which an applicant can submit a waiver request.

Identifying degrees that are entirely English taught is not an easy exercise, although it may seem so. In admission processes, you want to be fair, precise and efficient. For fairness/precision, you want an individual check on each individual's degree, but that would entail a lot of work/time. For efficiency, it would be ideal to have a long list of countries for exemptions. The current situation seeks the middle-ground: for the countries currently on the list, there is an almost 100% chance that these degrees will be taught entirely in English. So, upon submitting proof of these degree certificates, students are exempted from submitting an additional proof of English language proficiency. The expert group has discussed several other countries in the past and found that there were always degrees that were not entirely in English, too many for the sake of precision and fairness. They will keep on discussing this, and countries may join the list in the future. But, in the meantime, graduates from entirely English taught degrees in other countries can request an exemption. Thus, there is no exemption *a priori* for them, but they receive one only if their degree (transcript etc.) indeed specifies an entirely English taught degree. To put it into perspective: in the 2023 admissions season, the GSSS had 220 requests for exemption, of which 147 were granted (the exemptions may have involved other issues, too, but most are based upon this rule).

We think that UvA's policy and our procedures are adequate. They are not perfect, and they need regular review and finetuning. This is done within an UvA-framework and based upon the expertise of the members of the expert group.

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<sup>1</sup> Master TER article B.3.5, section 2 states 'Applicants who have completed their entirely English-taught Bachelor's degree in Australia, Canada (with the exception of Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom or the United States of America are exempted from providing proof of English language proficiency as stipulated under paragraph 1.'