

**GUIDELINES:  
INTENSIVE  
ENGLISH  
PROGRAMME  
(IEP)**

**[DRAFT]**

This document contains guidelines for implementing the Intensive English Programme (IEP) by Higher Education Providers.

Malaysian Qualifications Agency  
(MQA)

Policy Division

Guidelines: Intensive English Programme (IEP)

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## FOREWORD

Excellence in English language and communication skills is one of the key elements in the Malaysian education setting. Hence, it is crucial to produce a guideline as a resource for assessing language proficiency against internationally recognised standards. Acknowledging the vital role that high English proficiency skills play in the success of our graduates, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) is committed to supporting Higher Education Providers (HEP) in equipping our tertiary learners with the necessary language and communication abilities. In this regard, *the Guideline: Intensive English Programmes (IEP)* serves as an essential resource to ensure that HEP deliver quality English language programmes that meet global standards.

The IEP guidelines provide HEP with a systematic approach to designing structured English proficiency programmes, aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR is recognised internationally as a framework for describing language competencies. It defines language abilities on a six-level scale, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), indicating the degree of mastery in a language. By providing a set of guidelines based on the global framework for implementing high quality English proficiency programmes as well administering tests / assessments appropriate for evaluating language abilities at particular levels, the MQA aims to enhance learners' readiness for academic success, thereby contributing to the overall quality of education in Malaysia.

MQA believes that the IEP guidelines will be an valuable resource for HEP, assisting them in equipping students with the English language skills that reflect the CEFR level(s) appropriate for their academic pursuits and future endeavours. Additionally, it is expected that HEP will offer consistent support to their language educators and practitioners in planning and delivering the English language course(s) at the required level(s).

Finally, MQA extends its heartfelt appreciation to all the panel members and stakeholders for their contributions to the development of the IEP guidelines. Together, let us continue to strive for excellence, ensuring that our education system remains competitive, dynamic and globally recognised.

Thank you.

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Chief Executive Officer

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## ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

No.	Abbreviations/Acronyms	In Full
1.	MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
2.	IEP	Intensive English Programme
3.	HEP	Higher Education Provider
4.	CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
5.	MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
6.	ELHAM	English Language Higher Education Assessment in Malaysia
7.	COPPA	Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation
8.	JPT	Department of Higher Education (Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi)
9.	MUET	Malaysian University English Test
10.	TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
11.	IELTS	International English Language Testing System
12.	CPE	Cambridge Partnership in Education (CPE)
13.	BOE	The Board of Examiners
14.	CPD	Continuous Professional Development



## SECTION 1

### OVERVIEW

In an increasingly globalised world, English language proficiency is more vital than ever for academic and professional success. This proficiency is a key requirement for entry into Higher Education Providers (HEP) in Malaysia. While the Ministry of Higher Education has published a list of recognised English Assessment tests for international students to demonstrate their English proficiency as part of the admission process, certain gaps and issues have emerged. Despite meeting the entry requirements, some students still lack sufficient English language proficiency to succeed in their courses. Additionally, the HEP have a comprehensive and contextualised understanding of the English language requirements of their respective institutions. Therefore, there is a need for the HEP to autonomously conduct their own programmes that enable students to meet the specific English language requirements of each HEP. It is important to provide alternative pathways into the HEP that are localised yet aligned with international standards. This approach reduces the dependence on international proficiency tests while ensuring that students are adequately prepared for academic success within the Malaysian higher education system.

To address this need, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has proposed the establishment of Intensive English Programmes (IEP) at the HEP. Designed to serve as an effective means for meeting the English language entry requirements of the respective HEP, this programme is open to both local and international students. Inclusive of comprehensive assessment, the IEP is an educational programme tailored to the specific entry requirements of each university. Most importantly, the IEP of each HEP is accredited by the MQA to ensure their effectiveness and quality. The agency has developed clear and comprehensive guidelines to support Malaysian HEP in creating and implementing high-quality IEP.

Guided by the principles outlined in the English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025, the IEP comprises three components:

curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment. The guidelines cover all these aspects, including programme design and assessment strategies. The guidelines must be read together with the following documents:

- i. Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (2nd edition) (2017)
- ii. Programme Standards: Language (2020)
- iii. Guidelines to Good Practices: Assessment of Student Learning (2nd edition) (2023)
- iv. English Language Higher Education Assessment in Malaysia (ELHAM) (2024)
- v. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, assessment – Companion volume (2020)
- vi. Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR): A Manual (2009)

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

1.1.1 The guidelines for Intensive English Programmes (IEPs) serve multiple purposes, all aimed at securing the delivery of high-quality language instruction and support to international and local students so that the IEP function as an effective access facilitator for university entry requirements.

1.1.2 The guidelines are designed to:

### 1.1.2.1 **Ensure alignment to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**

The guidelines provide the HEP with a framework to promote a common understanding of English language standards by ensuring that the IEP incorporate the principles and practices outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the CEFR descriptors in the assessment of students' language proficiency.

### **1.1.2.2 Provide Resource Documents for the HEP**

The guidelines provide resource documents that can be utilised by the HEP to deliver effective language instruction and set appropriate English language standards to meet the needs of their academic programmes.

### **1.1.2.3 Support ESL Practitioners and Provide Ongoing Support for Students**

The guidelines offer practical guidance to ESL practitioners in programme planning and implementation in the HEP, enabling the IEP to provide ongoing ESL support for students so that they can improve their English language skills throughout their academic journey.

## **1.2 THE CONCEPT OF THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME**

1.2.1 IEP is a programme designed to equip students with the essential language skills to pursue their studies at the HEP. It is open to students who have and who have not met the English language entry requirement of the respective HEP. The curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment strategies of the programme are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

1.2.2 While many HEP have already established their own IEP, it is essential that they revise their current practices to align with the guidelines provided by the MQA for accreditation purposes. This ensures that the accredited IEP reflect the standard set by the MQA, thus maintaining quality and consistency across all programmes.

## **1.3 POLICIES UNDERGIRDING THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME**

1.3.1 Currently, international students whose native language is not English must provide evidence of their English language proficiency from a list

(dated 6 Mac 2023) endorsed by the Department of Higher Education (Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi, JPT) before they can register for a programme of study.

1.3.2 The IEP provides a pathway for prospective students to access to programmes of study at HEP. Accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and aligned to CEFR, the IEP offers a viable alternative to English proficiency tests such as TOEFL, IELTS and MUET. At the same time, the HEP has control over the curriculum, teaching and learning methods, and assessment tools of the IEP. By enrolling in the IEP, students can meet the English language entry requirements set by the HEP before commencing their chosen programmes of study.

1.3.3 The main features of the IEP are as follows:

1.3.3.1 Students who can enrol in the programme are those who have:

- not met the English Language entry requirements;
- not taken any of the recognised English Language proficiency assessments;
- met the English Language entry requirements but still need to enhance their proficiency.

1.3.3.2 Before commencing in the IEP, students are required to take an English Placement Test to determine the appropriate level of the programme that addresses their English language needs.

1.3.3.3 There are approximately 200 guided learning hours per IEP level in accordance with CEFR recommendations (Cambridge Assessment, 2024). Each level includes four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

- 1.3.3.4 There are 1 – 6 levels in the IEP to cater for three categories of users i.e., Basic, Independent and Proficient Users (see **Table 1.1 CEFR User Levels**).

**Table 1.1**

*CEFR User Levels*

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

- 1.3.3.5 The curriculum, teaching and learning materials and assessments of the IEP must align with the standards and descriptors of CEFR.

- 1.3.3.6 Upon completion of the IEP, students will be awarded a certificate indicating the proficiency level they have achieved. They can use this certificate to show that they have met the entry requirements for their chosen programme of study.

1.3.3.7 The HEP intending to offer the IEP need to meet the following criteria:

- i. Set up a designated centre responsible for English language teaching and Learning (e.g., a Language Faculty / Centre that services the English language proficiency courses for the HEP, and/or offers English major programmes such as TESL / English Language / English Linguistics degrees).
- ii. Sufficient staff strength, with a minimum of 5 dedicated teaching staff for the IEP (based on simulation of 25 hours a week (200 / 5 days) x 4 levels / 18 hours per staff).
- iii. A Staff: Student ratio of 1:20.
- iv. Adequate facilities and resources such as classrooms, language labs, hybrid teaching equipment, access to library facilities, access to internet and Wi-Fi connectivity.
- v. Administrative support
- vi. Student support

1.3.3.8 The management of the programme will be overseen by the designated responsibility centre within the respective HEP, such as the Language Centre, Faculty of Language.

1.3.3.9 The Intensive English Programme (IEP) must undergo an accreditation process by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to demonstrate that its curriculum and assessment are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and that it meets the required number of student learning hours.

## SECTION 2: QUALITY REQUIREMENTS BASED ON SEVEN QUALITY AREAS

### INTRODUCTION

The Intensive English Programme (IEP) is a language proficiency course designed for students who have not met the English language requirement of the HEP as well as students who wish to improve their English language proficiency. Based on the Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA, 2nd Edition), the Guidelines are divided into seven quality areas to guide the HEP in assuring and maintaining the quality of their respective IEP.

This section presents the descriptions of each of the seven areas:

- i. Programme Development and Delivery;
- ii. Assessment of Student Learning;
- iii. Student Selection and Support Services;
- iv. Academic Staff;
- v. Educational Resources;
- vi. Programme Management; and
- vii. Programme Monitoring, Review and Continual Quality Improvement.

These standards are the minimum requirements that must be met, and compliance must be demonstrated in the implementation of the IEP.

#### **Area 1: Programme Development and Delivery**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the development, approval and structure of the Intensive English Programme (IEP).

#### **1.1 Statement of Educational Objectives of Academic Programme and Learning Outcomes**

##### **1.1.1 Educational Objectives**

The Programme Educational Objectives (PEO) of the IEP should be in line with the vision, mission and goals of the HEP, while focusing on

producing students capable of meeting the specific language needs and activities of the discipline it serves.

### 1.1.2 Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes (LOs) are explicit statements describing the achievement of learners, which are assessed upon completion of a period of study. Where appropriate, the learning outcomes of the IEP should cumulatively reflect the five domains of learning outcomes aimed to develop well-balanced individuals with holistic competencies.

As stated in the Language Programme Standards (2020), the five clusters of learning outcomes are:

- i. Knowledge and Understanding;
- ii. Cognitive Skills;
- iii. Functional Work Skills with a focus on:
  - a. Practical Skills
  - b. Interpersonal Skills
  - c. Communication Skills
  - d. Digital Skills
  - e. Numeracy Skills
  - f. Leadership, Autonomy and Responsibility
- iv. Personal and Entrepreneurial Skills; and
- v. Ethics and Professionalism (p.5).

**1.1.3** The Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO) must be mapped to the Programme Educational Objectives (PEO) as shown in **Table 1.2**:



**Table 1.2**

Matrix of Programme Learning Outcomes against the Programme Educational Objectives

Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO)	Programme Educational Objectives (PEO)			
	PEO1	PEO2	PEO3	PEO4
PLO 1				
PLO 2				
PLO 3				

## 1.2 Programme Development: Process, Content, Structure and Learning Teaching Methods

### 1.2.1 Programme Structure and Content

The IEP covers four (4) proficiency skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) amounting to 200 guided learning hours per level as tabulated by the CEFR Framework. The programme may be managed according to users at different levels of CEFR (see **Table 1.1**). The HEP may offer a minimum of 1 level and a maximum of 6 levels.

### 1.2.2 Processes to develop and approve the curriculum

The development and approval of the IEP curriculum follow the related practices in the respective HEP. Senate approval must be obtained prior to the implementation of the IEP. Information on the process involved must be clearly documented.

### 1.2.3 Stakeholders and Educational Experts

Prior to the implementation of the IEP, relevant stakeholders and educational experts should be consulted in the development of the curriculum. There should be continuous consultation and feedback for the improvement of the programme.

## 1.2.4 Fulfilment of requirements of the discipline of study

1.2.4a The curriculum and assessments of the IEP need to be CEFR aligned.

1.2.4b The HEP must ensure that the distribution of guided hours for language skills follow the CEFR levels as shown in **Table 2** below:

**Table 2**

*Distribution of Guided Hours for Language Skills (Sample)*

Level / Skills	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Others (Grammar, Vocabulary)	Guided Hours (per level)
C1	40	60	40	60		200
B2	40	60	40	60		200
B1	50	50	40	50	10	200
A2	60	40	40	40	20	200
Total						

1.2.4c. Each course offered in the IEP must be explained clearly in terms of its level, course code, course name, course learning outcome(s), prerequisite (if applicable) and name of staff as shown in Table 3 as below:

**Table 3**

*Brief Description of Courses (Sample)*

Level	Course Code	Course Name	CLO	Prerequisite	Name of Academic Staff


1.2.4d. Each course must be given a brief description using the 'Course Information' form as shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4**  
*Course Information (Sample)*

1.	Name and Code of Course:
2.	Synopsis:
3.	Name(s) of academic staff:
4.	Trimester and year offered:
5.	Credit value:
6.	Pre-requisite/co-requisite (if any):
7.	Course Classification: Major
8.	Course learning outcomes (CLO): CLO 1 - .... CLO 2 - .... CLO 3 - ....

### 1.2.5 Recommended Learning Teaching Methods

It is necessary to have suitable instructional and pedagogical approaches that are directly related to the desired goals and outcomes of the educational programme. The following are the suggested learning and teaching methods for IEP:

- i. Lectures/Seminars
- ii. Problem-based Learning / Task-based Learning / Project-based Learning
- iii. Blended Learning
- iv. Field Trips (where appropriate)

HEP is also recommended to include Blended Learning as a teaching method to provide Self Instructional Materials (SIM) and Electronic

Learning Platform to support student learning. To complement blended learning, the HEP may provide additional support in the form of physical meetings or consultations to help students improve their language competence.

### **1.3 Programme Delivery**

- 1.3.1** The curriculum of IEP must satisfy the requirements of the discipline of study, accounting for the relevant programme standards, industry and professional standards, and industry best practices. The HEP is responsible for ensuring the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of the IEP. The programme requires a coordinator and a team of academic personnel, such as a programme committee, who possess the autonomy to ensure the successful implementation of the programme.
- 1.3.2** Students must be provided with a conducive learning environment and space with adequate teaching and learning tools. Instructors are encouraged to embed innovations and variations in teaching, learning, and assessments. At the beginning of their studies, students should be provided with up-to-date details on programme goals, structure, outline, schedule, credit value, learning outcomes, and evaluation methods. The programme needs to gather stakeholders' feedback to improve its delivery and quality.

### **Area 2: Assessment of Student Learning**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes, outlining appropriate methods for evaluating language proficiency in the Intensive English Programme (IEP) students.

## 2.1 Relationship between Assessment and Learning Outcomes

“Assessment of student learning is a key aspect of quality assurance, and it is one of the most important measures to show the achievement of learning outcomes. Hence, it is crucial that an appropriate assessment method and mechanism is in place. Qualifications are awarded based on the results of the assessment. The methods of student assessment must be clear, consistent, effective, reliable and in line with current practices. They must clearly measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes” (COPPA 2nd Edition, 2017:12).

The English Language Education Roadmap 2015-2025 indicates that assessment is one of the important components of an English language programme and that the “assessment procedures need to test the right things and measure the extent to which students are achieving the intended learning goals” (Roadmap, 2015:20). In the case of IEP which includes four proficiency skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, and is arranged according to the CEFR level based (See Section 2, Area 1), the assessment should be able to measure students’ proficiency at the said level although the HEP have the autonomy to have an integrated assessment that combines the skills or to assess students separately according to the skills, depending on the learning outcomes of the programme.

The IEP is a programme designed to help students achieve the required level of English language proficiency to meet the HEP entry requirements. HEP may apply the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) when developing assessments, ensuring that they engage students in a way that encourages performance aligned with the desired learning outcomes and accurately reflects their language abilities.

## 2.2 Assessment Methods

Prior to enrolling in the IEP, the HEP must offer a placement test to determine the students' current language proficiency level, whether they are at CEFR A2 or B1 or B2 level. The test items for the placement test may be adopted and/or adapted from syndicated examinations like MUET or IELTS or TOEFL which are continuum-based to identify the students' proficiency level. Once the results are confirmed, they can proceed to their respective classes.

It is customary for a language programme to incorporate both formative and summative assessments, depending on their intended purpose. Some HEP may use formative assessments to gauge students' learning progress and achievement midway through the programme. This approach allows instructors to adjust the learning process as needed before the programme concludes. The requirement for formative assessment varies depending on the specific nature of the IEP of each HEP. However, it is generally advisable to minimise or avoid formative assessments during the IEP. The students will then sit for a test (i.e. summative assessment) at the end of the IEP to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement (Guidelines to Good Practices: Assessment of Student Learning, 2023).

A pass should indicate that the candidate has achieved the required level of English language proficiency. Where appropriate, it is recommended that the programme aligns with the HEP's grading system to clearly define what constitutes a passing grade.

Unlike the continuum-based examinations such as MUET or IELTS or TOEFL, the summative assessment of IEP **should be a level-based assessment** which provides an in-depth evaluation of students' mastery of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2024). This also allows the instructors to focus on enhancing students' learning and raising their language proficiency to the appropriate level. For example, if the student's placement result shows that they are at

CEFR B1 level and they enrol in the corresponding IEP CEFR B2 level, the summative assessment will have to be aligned with the CEFR B2 level.

Test setters can refer to the four-volume CEFR-aligned English Language Higher Education Assessment in Malaysia (ELHAM) documents for guidance on language assessments. Published by the Ministry of Higher Education, the titles of these volumes are: (1) *Assessing Listening in Universities*, (2) *Assessing Speaking in Universities*, (3) *Assessing Reading in Universities*, and (4) *Assessing Writing in Universities*. Cambridge Partnership in Education (CPE), the external consultant of ELHAM, has reviewed and endorsed the documents as a reference for CEFR-aligned assessment. Organised according to CEFR levels of A2 to C1, these documents provide guidelines for the selection of appropriate test items to assess students' language proficiency. They also include sample test items from Cambridge Assessment English handbooks for A2 Key (KET), B1 Preliminary (PET), B2 First (FCE), and C1 Advanced (CAE), along with justifications for selecting specific items for each respective level (see ELHAM 2024 for details).

Test setters are expected to use a variety of methods and tools appropriate for the assessment of learning outcomes and competencies. Some suggested forms of assessment are stated below, but not limited to the following:

- oral presentations
- participation in face-to-face and/or online discussions
- listening comprehension tests
- reading comprehension tests
- written assessments, inclusive of article reviews, essays, quizzes and report writing.

HEP are given the autonomy to establish committees and create mechanisms to ensure assessment validity, reliability, integrity, currency and fairness, as well as to maintain the confidentiality of assessment documents and records. The *Guidelines to Good Practices: Assessment of Student Learning (2023)* provides the structure, functions, integration of assessment processes and procedures

(e.g., Table 11: Assessment Integration and Process at the Institutional Level) which could be adapted by the HEP to manage their assessments.

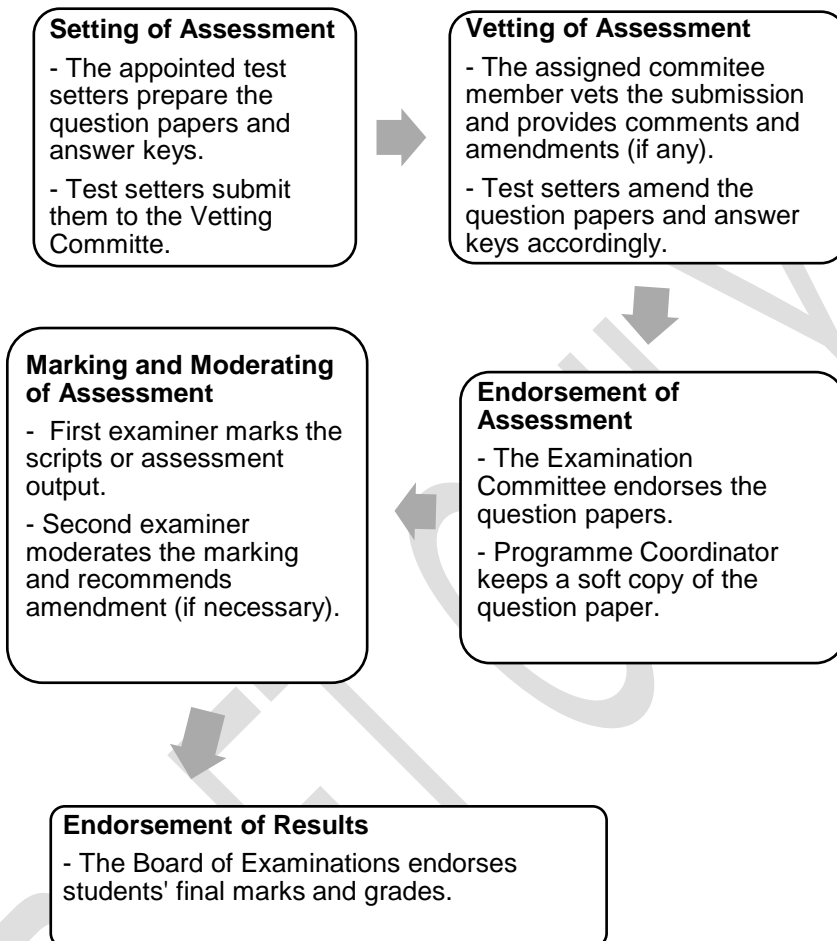
The IEP (or HEP) assessment committee are responsible for the moderation and verification of assessments, including placement tests, formative and summative assessments. For summative assessments (or final examinations), the moderation and verification processes should be more rigorous, involving both internal and external reviewers. These processes can be conducted internally, following common examination procedures familiar to the assessment committee.

The following flowchart (see **Figure 2.1**) shows an example of the process of setting and marking summative assessment in the IEP. The details of each stage would depend on the requirements of the programme as set by the HEP. Once the summative assessment is set according to the established criteria, it will be moderated by the Vetting Committee and endorsed by the Examination Committee. A soft copy of the assessment will be kept by the Programme Coordinator for records. The marking of the assessment will be carried out by the examiner and subsequently moderated by a second examiner. The Board of Examinations (BOE) will endorse the results before they are officially released to the students.



**Figure 2.1**

*The process of setting and marking summative assessment in the IEP*



Students should be informed about the examination process through various communication platforms, such as email, LMS, WhatsApp, or Telegram. They should be notified when they are required to sit for the examinations.

Academic plagiarism is an unethical act that must be prevented to ensure the credibility and integrity of not only the students but also the programme. The HEP is responsible for providing the guidelines and mechanism in addressing academic plagiarism among students.

If the assessment methods are reviewed periodically, the HEP should provide a description of the programme review.

The student assessment methods may vary in terms of duration, task format, weighting, assessment criteria, and coverage. The HEP can refer to the guidelines proposed in ELHAM (2024) or CEFR-aligned documents in the construction of assessment tasks. Students must be clearly informed about the assessment methods and grading system used. Additionally, timely feedback on their academic performance should be provided to give students the opportunity to take remedial actions. The HEP should define the methods for providing feedback whether verbal or written. In cases where students fail to meet the required passing level, the right to appeal for a resit examination will be subject to the HEP's Examination Regulations.

Test setters may refer to Table 12 Management of Student Assessment and Process in the Guidelines to Good Practices: Assessment of Student Learning (2023) for detailed assessment-related information, including types of assessments, the administration process as well as the assessment marking and grading mechanisms.

### **2.3 Management of Student Assessment**

The HEP may assign a faculty or language centre to conduct and oversee the implementation of the IEP. The members of the faculty or language centre would be responsible for the running of the programme, including the management of student assessment. All assessment documents and academic records must remain confidential and securely stored, accessible only to the IEP coordinator or authorised staff members within the faculty or language centre.

Results will be released to students after being endorsed by the Board of Examiners (BOE), through a platform such as a student portal managed by the IEP coordinator. Students who do not pass the assessment may apply for a resit, subject to the HEP regulations for the IEP and any policies related to

student visas or study duration. The HEP has the authority to establish guidelines and procedures for students to appeal their results and must provide an appeal flowchart for students to follow.

### **Area 3: Student Selection and Support Services**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the recruitment process and support services for students enrolled in the Intensive English Programme (IEP).

#### **3.1 Student Selection**

The IEP is open to international and local students. The selection of students into the IEP is based on the entry requirements of the HEP. Students who do not meet the entry requirements or who have not sat for the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) prescribed assessments can be admitted to the programme. Students who have met the minimum entry requirements but wish to enhance their proficiency can also be admitted to the programme.

Prior to enrolment, all students are required to take the English Placement Test of the IEP. This test is designed to ascertain the English proficiency level of each student, allowing them to be placed at an appropriate level within the programme. By accurately assessing students' English language proficiency, the placement test ensures that each student receives instruction that corresponds to their language learning abilities and needs.

The HEP should ensure that the proportion of each student intake is in line with the institution's capacity to effectively deliver the programme.

#### **3.2 Student Support Services**

The IEP must ensure that students have access to adequate and appropriate support services. This includes having:

- a designated administrative unit within the HEP to oversee student welfare;

- an effective induction programme to familiarise students with the programme requirements and resources;
- academic, non-academic, and career counselling services to support students;
- mechanisms in place to actively identify and assist students who may be facing difficulties;
- clear processes and procedures for disciplinary cases to maintain a conducive learning environment;
- an active mechanism to allow students to voice their grievances and concerns.

### 3.3 Student Representation and Participation

It is essential to evaluate the adequacy of student representation and participation at each HEP. The IEP must ensure that students are actively involved through

- policies and processes related to students' interests and welfare.
- linkages between students and their potential faculties and academies to enhance their learning experience and information access.
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and workshops to facilitate the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills.
- student activities that promote character building and fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility.

#### Area 4: Academic Staff

This section of the guidelines focuses on the recruitment, qualifications, and development of academic staff, ensuring that they are suitably qualified, regularly trained, and supported in their professional growth to maintain the quality of the Intensive English Programme (IEP).

“As the quality of the academic staff is one of the most important components in assuring the quality of higher education, an HEP is expected to search for and appoint the best-suited candidates, to serve its programmes, in an open, transparent and fair manner. To achieve this, The HEP are expected to design and implement an academic

staff search and recruitment practice that is as efficient as it is effective to achieve the desired results. It is important that every programme recruits a sufficient number of qualified academic staff, provides a conducive working environment that attracts and retains talented individuals. The role and job description of the academic staff need to be clearly defined and reflect a fair distribution of responsibilities. It is important for the HEP to provide a staff development programme for its academic staff, for them to remain current in their knowledge and skills, both in their chosen discipline as well as in their pedagogical skills” (COPPA 2nd Edition, 2017).

#### **4.1 Recruitment and Management**

The recruitment and management of academic staff should be read alongside the Language Programme Standards (2020) and the COPPA 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2017).

##### Academic staff qualification

A minimum of a Bachelor’s degree (Level 6, MQF) in any English Language related Programmes with a minimum of C1 of CEFR or its equivalent in English.

##### Academic staff ratio

- i. At least 60% of the academic staff are full-timers.
- ii. Part-time staff may consist of academics or industry practitioners.

##### Staff-student ratio

Overall staff-student ratio in the classroom: 1 to 20.

#### **4.2 Service and Development**

In order to deliver a quality programme and produce proficient students, the HEP must employ qualified and capable academic staff. Therefore, it is imperative that the academic qualifications of their staff are accredited by the relevant and recognised accreditation bodies. The HEP may prioritise hiring individuals with a certain level of work experience to enhance programme delivery. It is also important that the HEP provide development programmes for

new staff as well as continuous professional enrichment for all staff to enhance their expertise and skills in teaching, learning and testing.

Academic staff should be strongly encouraged to pursue higher academic degrees or professional certifications to further enhance their qualifications. While the HEP may organise customised training sessions based on demand, academic staff are expected to engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to meet the specialised needs of English Language teaching and learning. Academic staff are encouraged to actively participate in language teaching, learning and assessment conferences, seminars, workshops, and short courses. More importantly, all academic staff need to be well trained by experienced trainers who are well-versed in the CEFR and ELHAM guidelines.

### **Area 5: Educational Resources**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the adequate provision of educational resources, including physical and financial facilities, to support the successful implementation of the Intensive English Programme (IEP).

“Adequate educational resources are necessary to support the teaching and learning activities of a programme. These include all the required academic and instructional expertise, physical facilities, information and communication technologies, research facilities, and finance” (COPPA 2nd Edition, 2017).

It is the responsibility of the HEP to provide adequate educational resources to ensure that quality instructional activities are carried out.

Educational resources recommended for the IEP include:

#### **5.1 Physical Facilities**

Adequate physical facilities are a necessary requirement for the successful implementation of the programme. These include lecture rooms (with sufficient

Audio-Visual facilities), library/resource centre (including on-line resources), and language laboratory/ web-based language learning resources.

## **5.2 Financial Resources**

Adequate financial resources are essential for the purposes of hiring qualified teachers, purchasing educational materials, as well as maintaining facilities.

## **Area 6: Programme Management**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the governance, leadership, and administration of the Intensive English Programme (IEP), emphasising clear programme management, qualified leadership, sufficient administrative support, and proper academic record-keeping for effective operations and quality assurance.

While the methods and styles of administration and management may differ between HEP, “governance that reflects the collective leadership of an academic organisation must emphasise excellence and scholarship” (COPPA 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2017).

### **6.1 Programme management**

Leadership at the programme level needs to provide clear directions, establish management structure and functions, coordinate with various constituents within the HEP in terms of staff recruitment and training, student admission, finance and resource management. It also needs to partner with significant stakeholders regarding curriculum development, pedagogy, research and consultancy. There must be sufficient autonomy for the leadership to incorporate relevant analyses, feedback and recommendations.

### **6.2 Programme Leadership**

Suitable and qualified personnel selected for the leadership position must demonstrate knowledge of the field and attributes of good work ethics. Criteria for the selection of programme leaders (e.g., Head of Language Centre /

Programme, Language Unit Coordinator) and their responsibilities need to be made clear and transparent.

The programme leader must have at least a Bachelor's degree in a related field, and a minimum of five years' working experience in teaching, administration, programme coordination / management.

### **6.3 Administrative Staff**

Programme leaders must be supported by sufficient qualified administrative staff in programme and student record management as well as related activities. Administrative staff need to have regular performance reviews and appropriate training opportunities to fulfil the specific needs of the programme.

### **6.4 Academic Records**

The programme must have appropriate policies and practices concerning the nature, content and security of student data and/or records relating to their admission, performance, completion and/or progression in such form as is practical to preserve these records for future reference. The programme must periodically review policies on the security of records, including the increased use of relevant digital tools and safety systems.

## **Area 7: Programme Monitoring, Review and Continual Quality Improvement**

This section of the guidelines focuses on the mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing, and improving the quality of the Intensive English Programme (IEP), including the roles of internal and external stakeholders, continuous curriculum evaluation, feedback gathering, and systematic reporting of student performance and external reviews.



## 7.1 Mechanisms for Programme Monitoring, Review and Continual Quality Improvement

Policies and well-defined mechanisms for regular monitoring, reviewing, and evaluation are required to improve the quality of the IEP. The HEP is responsible to regularly monitor, review, and evaluate the structures, processes, curriculum components, as well as student progress and performance throughout the programme. The committee tasked with this responsibility should be granted sufficient autonomy to effectively carry out its duties. It is strongly recommended that the department collaborates with the HEP's central Quality Assurance Unit to ensure objectivity, and as such, continuous engagement between them is expected.

It is also crucial for the HEP to gather feedback from various sources, including students, alumni, academic staff, employers, professional bodies, and informed citizens to improve programme quality. The HEP should get feedback from external advisors who are involved throughout the process and reviewers who provide insights into the continuous improvement of the programme.

Evaluating student performance can provide valuable insights. For instance, a high failure rate may indicate issues with curriculum content, teaching-learning activities, or the assessment system, prompting the program committees to investigate and take corrective actions. Student feedback, collected through questionnaires, helps to identify programme strengths and weaknesses, enabling the HEP to address specific issues.

In short, the HEP should demonstrate their capacity to monitor and review the IEP regularly. This can be evidenced by, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. The establishment of an internal Quality Assurance (QA) process which reflects a close working relationship between the designated responsibility centre and the QA unit of the HEP

- ii. Conducting a comprehensive curriculum review every two to three years, in addition to regular curriculum updates which reflect current developments of the field
- iii. The appointment of experienced and qualified external advisors and reviewers to safeguard programme quality
- iv. On-going benchmarking against similar programmes offered at top national and international universities
- v. Engagement with stakeholders at least once every three years

## **7.2 Mechanism for reporting**

External advisors' report and the HEP's responses to the report must be clearly documented.

Analysis of student performance in the IEP, which may include average study duration, assessment scores, examination pass rates, student success and dropout rates as well as their learning experiences.

## **SECTION 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE BY MQA**

Improving programme quality requires the designated responsibility centre (faculty/centre/department) to carry out regular monitoring, reviewing, and evaluation of its structures and processes, curriculum components and student development.

### **3.1 CRITERIA FOR INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME (IEP) CENTRE**

The HEP that intends to be a centre for IEP must fulfil the following criteria:

#### **3.1.1 MANAGEMENT**

- i. Establish an IEP Centre led by a qualified and knowledgeable individual in the field.
- ii. Provide an organisational chart and clear job descriptions for all appointed positions.
- iii. Appoint qualified academic and support staff.
- iv. Ensure all IEP academic and support staff have opportunities and support to participate in relevant development and enhancement programmes offered by MQA and other parties.
- v. Implement an effective student record-keeping system to support the centre's functions.

#### **3.1.2 POLICIES AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

- i. Follow the policies and procedures established by MQA.
- ii. Ensure information about IEP policies and procedures is accessible and widely disseminated to all stakeholders.
- iii. Use appropriate assessment instrument formats/standards.
- iv. Ensure the assessment process and notification of results are handled within the time frame specified.
- v. Provide relevant advisory services to IEP candidates to help them understand their potential and options, with follow-up support when needed.

- vi. Ensure that individuals involved in advising the candidates are not directly involved in the assessment process.
- vii. Implement a suitable and transparent appeal system as outlined by MQA.
- viii. A comprehensive quality review and monitoring system should be implemented and conducted annually. A written report of these activities should be prepared and submitted to MQA.

### **3.1.3 IEP VERIFICATION PANEL OF ASSESORS (POA)**

- i. The verification panel safeguards the integrity and credibility of the IEP. They are specialists in programme evaluation and language assessment (inclusive of expertise in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- ii. The appointed verification panel must consist of experts from the relevant field, have reasonable duration of appointment and well-defined terms of appointment.
- iii. Every appointed panel must complete the relevant training courses on IEP policies, procedures and assessment by MQA before carrying out their responsibilities.
- iv. The verification process of the IEP should be conducted transparently, fairly, and reliably based on good evaluation principles.

### **3.1.4 IEP VERIFICATION FROM MQA**

#### **3.1.4.1 APPROVAL**

All applications for conducting the IEP must be submitted to the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) using Form IEP-01 included in Appendix 1. The verification and approval of IEP will

be carried out by MQA. The IEP's approval status is granted for a period of five years. The following are the different types of MQA approval:

- i. The HEP is granted **Approval Status without Conditions** to offer a programme when all criteria from Area 1 to Area 7 (in Section 2) have been met and supported by relevant documentation.
- ii. The HEP that has not fulfilled certain criteria from Area 1 to Area 7 will be granted **Approval Status with Conditions**. While the HEP will be permitted to offer the programme, they will be subject to a monitoring process to improve the yet to fulfil criteria. The HEP should demonstrate compliance with the identified criteria and submit the required documentation within three months from the date of the conditional approval.
- iii. For the HEP that fails to comply with the requirements, its application shall be considered **rejected**. The HEP can submit a new application to MQA if desired.

#### **3.1.4.2 MONITORING**

MQA will closely monitor the performance of IEP Centres and enforce compliance where necessary to ensure that all centres adhere consistently to the terms and principles of these guidelines in maintaining quality standards.

#### **3.1.4.3 RENEWAL**

The IEP renewal can be submitted to MQA six months before the expiry of the IEP approval date. Should the HEP fail to comply with the time frame, they will have to submit a new application.

#### **3.1.4.4 REVOCATION**

MQA reserves the right to conduct a compliance check at any point during the programme. The verification approval for the IEP may be revoked if conditions are not met during the compliance check.

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## REFERENCES

- i. Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2018). Malaysian Qualifications Framework, MQF 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *Cyberjaya, Malaysia*.
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- iv. Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2023). Guidelines to Good Practices: Assessment of Student Learning. *Cyberjaya, Malaysia*.
- v. English Language Higher Education Assessment in Malaysia (ELHAM) 2024.
- vi. Companion volume Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (2020).
- vii. Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR): A Manual (2009).

## LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS

BIL.	PANEL MEMBERS	ORGANISATION
1.	Prof. Madya Dr. Nik Aloesnita Nik Mohd Alwi <i>(Chairperson)</i>	Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA)
2.	Prof. Dr. Surinderpal Kaur a/p Chanan Singh <i>(Standard Writer)</i>	Universiti Malaya (UM)
3.	Dr. Suhaida Omar	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)
4.	Dr. Erda Wati Bakar	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)
5.	Prof. Madya Datin Dr. Veronica Petrus Atin	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)
6.	Dr. Joanna Tan Tjin Ai	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR)
7.	Dr. Jeanette Lim Boon Sier	Sunway University
8.	Encik Chandra Mohgan a/l Lechman	Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi (JPT)
9.	Puan Farizah Sufar	Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi (JPT)
10.	Puan Nazia Nurshafina Che Omar	Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS)
11.	Puan Rahah Raslan	Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS)



## **LIST OF ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS**

1. Language Deans' Council of Public University
2. Higher Education Provider
3. English Language Higher Education Assessment in Malaysia (ELHAM) team
4. English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015 – 2025 team

## **PILOT VISITS TO HEP**

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

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**MQA**

**INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME  
(IEP)**