

# Immigration Futures

Seamus Fagan  
English Australia

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- Recently there has been a spotlight on English proficiency in matters relating to immigration and citizenship.
- English language competence is seen as an important factor in contributing to students and migrants achieving positive study, settlement and employment outcomes.

- The Evaluation of General Skills Migration Categories (Birrell, Hawthorne & Richardson) has recommended that the threshold English language level be raised to a minimum of **6** on all components of IELTS for GSM visas.
- They further recommend that students who obtain an overall score of 7 with a minimum of 6 in all subtests will gain a maximum of 25 points.

- The Federal Government recently proposed that as well as migrants having to wait 4 years before they can obtain citizenship they would also have to take an English language test and failure in that will prevent them from becoming citizens.

- English Australia welcomes this focus on English language proficiency.
- It is, however, important to remember that English language proficiency as demonstrated by tests is not the only predictor of success, or necessarily a reliable indicator of language proficiency.

- Equally as important as English language proficiency is the opportunity for students to “acclimatise” themselves to Australian culture and the learning culture of Australian educational institutions.
- Preparatory programs like ELICOS assist with these important challenges for international students.

- There are two ways international students demonstrate their language proficiency for the purpose of entry to further studies
  - International English language tests like the IELTS/TOEFL etc
  - Direct Entry Tests/Programs which have been developed by individual language centres

- The receiving institution determines the appropriate English proficiency scores for students who come to their institution with an international English test or whether they will accept alternative Direct Entry Tests/Programs.
- If receiving institutions are concerned about the ongoing appropriacy of the levels they have set, they need to monitor the performance of students so they can make informed decisions about English proficiency entry scores.

- Entry level English proficiency scores are only a minimum English language score - international students need ongoing English language and academic support while undertaking their further studies, otherwise in some cases their language proficiency will “plateau”.
- To survive in a challenging environment international students often cling to their nationality groups and this further hinders the development of their English language skills.

- The proposal to award more points towards GSM for a higher level of English proficiency:
  - will require education providers to review their English language entry and support policies & practices
  - may provide an opportunity for ELICOS providers to provide intensive IELTS preparation classes for PR applicants who wish to improve their English proficiency