

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 74/2024

From : Secretary for Education
Ref : (4) in EDB/LTQ/PRO/57
Date : 27 March 2024

To : Heads of All Primary and Secondary Schools (except ESF schools and international schools)
- for necessary action

Enhanced Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR) for Teachers of English / Putonghua

(Note: This circular memorandum should be read by supervisors / heads and teachers of all primary and secondary schools)

Summary

The purpose of this circular memorandum is to announce the arrangements regarding the enhanced Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR) for English and Putonghua teachers with effect from the 2024/25 school year.

Background

2. The LPR policy has been implemented since 2000. The purpose of the policy is to enhance the quality of education by ensuring that all language teachers possess at least basic language proficiency. All teachers of English / Putonghua holding a **regular post**¹ in aided schools, as well as teachers of English / Putonghua in government schools, caput schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and private primary / secondary day schools offering a formal curriculum who are comparable to teachers holding a regular post in aided schools should have met the LPR. The LPR policy is **not applicable** to teachers employed under the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme and those in schools of English Schools Foundation (ESF) and international schools, as well as teachers using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language subject.

3. According to the existing LPR policy, all new / newly deployed teachers of English / Putonghua holding a regular post can meet the LPR before taking up teaching the respective language subject by two channels: (i) applying for exemption from the LPR if they hold relevant qualifications², and / or (ii) taking the Language Proficiency

¹ Teachers of English holding a regular post should also meet the teacher training and qualification requirements of language teachers recommended by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR). For details, please refer to the Education Bureau website (www.edb.gov.hk/sr).

² Serving and aspiring teachers who hold a relevant degree in English and have received relevant teacher training with specialism in English may apply for full exemption from the LPR (English Language). Those who possess specified results in the Certificate for the Test of Advanced Proficiency in Putonghua awarded by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority or the Certificate for the Test of Proficiency in Putonghua awarded by the State Language Commission may apply for partial exemption from the LPR (Putonghua).

Assessment (LPA)³, and attaining the proficiency requirement in the Classroom Language Assessment (CLA) within the first year of their taking up the duties.

4. Following the implementation of the LPR policy over the past 20 years, the overall language proficiency of English and Putonghua teachers has been improving. Taking into account the concerns from the education sector and stakeholders, the latest trends of education development, students' learning needs and schools' needs for deployment of human resources, the Education Bureau (EDB) has reviewed the arrangements of the LPR policy and formulated enhanced measures, which will take effect starting from the 2024/25 school year.

Details

5. Starting from the 2024/25 school year, under the enhanced arrangements, English or Putonghua teachers can meet the LPR through the following means, the details of which are as follows –

Teachers of English

Means	Details
(i) Holding relevant qualifications⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Serving and aspiring teachers who <u>hold a relevant degree in English and have received relevant teacher training with specialism in English</u> will be deemed to have attained the LPR, and may apply for exemption from the LPR.● Applications for exemption from the LPR are accepted all year round as usual. Starting from the 2024/25 school year, new / newly deployed teachers of English holding a regular post should submit applications to EDB <u>before 30 September</u> of the corresponding school year for verification of their eligibility.

³ Since the 2000/01 school year, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and the Education Bureau have jointly conducted the LPA annually, which assesses candidates' proficiency in English Language and Putonghua for teaching the respective subject in schools. The assessment consists of speaking and written papers, as well as a Classroom Language Assessment which is offered to teachers only. Candidates who attain Level 3 or above in all papers of the assessment are deemed to have met the LPR for teaching the relevant subject in schools.

⁴ For details, please refer to EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/exemption).

Means	Details
<p>(ii) Obtaining specified results in the designated test and assessment</p> <p>a. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Academic Module)</p> <p>b. CLA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serving and aspiring teachers who do not possess a relevant degree and teacher training as mentioned in (i) above should take the IELTS (Academic Module) and CLA, and obtain the following specified results – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers should attain an overall band score of <u>7.5 or above</u> with <u>no individual band scores</u> (i.e. the Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking band scores) <u>below 7.0 in the same Test Report Form.</u> b. Teachers should <u>obtain the “attained” results⁵ in the assessment.</u>

Teachers of Putonghua

Means	Details
<p>Obtaining specified results in the designated test and assessment</p> <p>a. The Test of Proficiency in Putonghua conducted by the State Language Commission</p> <p>b. CLA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serving and aspiring teachers should take the Test of Proficiency in Putonghua conducted by the State Language Commission and CLA, and obtain the following specified results – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teachers should <u>attain Grade A, Level 2 or above in the test.</u> b. Teachers should <u>obtain the “attained” results⁵ in the assessment.</u>

Teachers taking up an English Panel Chair (EPC) post in aided primary / secondary schools

6. Under the existing LPR policy, for an English teacher to be accorded priority for consideration of promotion / direct appointment to an EPC post in an aided primary / secondary school (to be referred to as “EPC” thereafter), he / she should have attained

⁵ Teachers should obtain the “attained” results in the CLA within the first year of their taking up the duties, that is, within the same sitting of the CLA, attain at least Level 3 or above on three out of the four scales and Level 2.5 or above on the remaining one scale. Starting from the CLA conducted in the 2024/25 school year, teachers have to attain the specified results in the designated tests in order to be eligible for sitting the assessment. The related handbooks will be released on EDB website in due course.

the stipulated requirement⁶. In line with the enhanced LPR, starting from the 2024/25 school year, the newly appointed or deployed EPC should meet the following LPR –

- (1) Attaining an overall band score of 8.0 or above with no individual band scores (i.e. the Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking band scores) below 7.5⁷ in the same Test Report Form in the Academic Module of IELTS; AND
- (2) Attaining the stipulated requirement in the CLA⁸.

Points to note

7. With the implementation of the enhanced LPR, the written and speaking assessments of the LPA jointly conducted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and EDB will cease to exist from the 2024/25 school year. The assessment results of those who entered for the LPA are still valid. Teachers who have attained the relevant results in the written and speaking assessments and CLA of the LPA and met the LPR will continue to be recognised, fulfilling the requirement for serving as a regular English or Putonghua teacher, or an EPC.

8. IELTS (Academic Module) test score remains valid for up to two years after the test date. New or newly deployed English teachers holding a regular post / EPC who possess **valid** test results as set out in Paragraph 5 / Paragraph 6 respectively will be deemed to have met the LPR. In this connection, if teachers have attained the specified results as stated above in the Academic Module of IELTS which are still valid when taking up teaching the English Language subject, they are not required to resit the test. Even if the teachers concerned serve as a regular English teacher / EPC at another school afterwards, they need not resit the test.

School accountability

9. To ensure that all the teachers of English / Putonghua possess basic language proficiency for delivering quality teaching, schools are advised to take proper note of the LPR policy. Starting from the 2024/25 school year, when appointing or deploying English / Putonghua teachers, schools must verify whether the teachers to be appointed have obtained the above-mentioned relevant qualifications, or require them to provide valid certification of results, to confirm that they have fulfilled the requirements as stipulated in the enhanced LPR. The Bureau will closely monitor the teachers' qualifications required of the LPR. Schools shall bear the responsibility to pay the

⁶ The stipulated requirement refers to attaining an average proficiency at Level 4 of the English LPR. For details, please refer to the EDB Circular No. 36/2001 "Provision of One Additional Senior Teacher Post in Aided Primary Schools" and the EDB Circular No. 37/2001 "English Language Proficiency Requirement for Filling English Panel Chair Posts in Aided Secondary Schools".

⁷ Teachers who have attained an average proficiency at Level 4 of the English LPR by September 2024 are not required to resit the IELTS to be eligible for consideration for promotion / direct appointment to an EPC post.

⁸ Newly appointed or deployed EPC should obtain the "attained with merit" results, that is, within the same sitting of the CLA, attain at least Level 4 or above on three out of the four scales and Level 3 or above on the remaining one scale.

salaries on their own if the newly appointed or deployed regular English / Putonghua teachers fail to meet the aforementioned enhanced LPR. EDB will also take appropriate follow-up actions, including requesting the schools to refund any overpayment of salaries to EDB.

Enquiries

10. More information about the LPR policy and the Frequently Asked Questions and Answers can be found on EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/lpr). For enquiries, please contact the Language Teacher Qualifications Team, EDB at 2892 5783. For enquiries relating to appointment matters of teachers, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officers.

Ms W P LEE
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections – for information