



**password**

accessible english language testing

From English Language Testing Ltd

password

# Password

## The English language test for HEIs

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# Password – a summary



- a test of English language knowledge
- developed for international students applying for foundation year and pre-sessional courses prior to a UK university degree course
- designed to be accessible, reliable and secure
- CEFR levels A2 into C1
- academically managed by CRELLA
- launched October 2008
- in use by over fifty UK HEIs in country and off shore, and increasingly by overseas institutions

# Knowledge not skills ?

- language knowledge is a necessary condition for, and powerful predictor of, language task performance
- tests of vocabulary and grammar routinely provide the highest correlations with total scores on skills-based batteries
- MCQ tests of grammar and vocabulary are common across most language learning contexts, 4 skills instruction is not
- pathway and EAP programmes teach study skills and should not assume ability in these on the part of learners

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# Another test ? What's different ?

- accessible online, on demand
  - “anytime, from anywhere”
- available to HEIs to administer themselves
  - we provide the test, they provide the facilities and administration
- flexible and cost effective
  - recruitment; test candidates on the spot
  - intake diagnostic filter; a level playing field for all students, the same test to identify weak students
  - placement; students in the right class on the first day
  - progress monitor on longer courses, a tool to drive up quality



# UKBA & universities

- changes, and the appearance of making changes, driven by political concerns
  - need to be seen to be tough on immigration
  - on going abuse of T4 visas (private FE especially ?)
- intent was NOT to affect universities
  - not seen as the problem
- universities have low drop out rates
  - a point of confusion in itself
  - to the UKBA this means “disappearing” students, if they leave the country this is fine
- recognition that fees paid by international students are vital to the sector



# UKBA changes affecting universities



- sponsor guidance given in a complex 81 page document, from 12 August 2010
  - also policy guidance
  - and it's really the Immigration Rules that matter
- for general English courses
  - students must be “B1 ready for B2”
- in brief, no change for students coming onto
  - university degree courses (NQF 6 or above level) and
  - pre-sessional (including pre-masters) courses leading to them
  - foundation degree courses (NQF 5 level) at degree awarding HEIs
  - there are no language requirement for these courses
    - except possibly independent pre-sessionals that must be at B2 level (stated in the guidance, not the Rules)
  - students coming onto these courses should be well above level of concern in any case
- increasing use of external tests by institutions

# And into the future ....



- 5th Nov 2010; Theresa May vows to restore confidence in the immigration system
  - reiterated the government's commitment to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands
  - education sector areas of concern
    - the standard of courses & entry criteria
    - ensuring that students return overseas
    - the right to work for students & dependants
  - ministers want to
    - improve accreditation and self-policing
    - focus resources on greatest risks
- 9<sup>th</sup> Nov; Michael Gove (in China with David Cameron) “hopes to expand Chinese students studying in the UK from the current figure of about 100,000”
  - already 3<sup>rd</sup> largest group of foreign students in the UK



# So what's all this about SELTs ?

- concept of a “secure English language test” (SELT) introduced by the UKBA
- must be full four skills and taken in an approved test centre
- ONLY required for students coming to study academic courses below, and not leading to, NQF 6 or degree level courses e.g. HND and diploma level
- NOT required for students coming onto degree courses (NQF 6+), pre-sessional courses leading to them, foundation degree courses, general English



# Why is Password not a SELT ?



- essentially, no customer demand
  - universities appreciate Password as it is; “fit for purpose”
  - reliable, accurate and secure
  - under their control
- current requirement is for a full four skills test
  - Password tests reading and, if the essay option is used, writing
  - extension to listening & speaking would fundamentally change the nature of the test
- universities could not administer themselves
  - unless they operated secure test centres



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