

November 2020



# EXAMINATIONS HANDBOOK

## Standard Operating Procedure 65

### Language Examination Policies

#### Amendments and date of issue

Amendments to this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) can be authorised only by the Chair of the Qualifications Board in consultation with that Board and the Examinations Committee.

This issue is 2020 version 1 and is dated November 2020.

#### Register of amendments

Version	Brief description of Amendment	Amendment	Date approved
2020.1	Original Handbook		23/11/2020

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## Summary

This SOP explains the Institute's policies in respect of qualification for guiding in different languages. There are currently three aspects:

- a) Academic criteria for language examinations
- b) Bilingualism
- c) Use of dictionaries in written examinations

These are described below.

## Language policy

Clients expect the highest level of language ability from Green and Blue Badge Guides. Such ability is part of our quality commitment and an important difference between Institute-qualified guides and others offering such services.

Candidates who successfully complete the Institute's Green or Blue Badge examinations are qualified to guide in the relevant area in their FIRST LANGUAGE as stated on their registration documentation. If they wish to guide in any other language, they must complete the relevant language examination and may not amend their language declaration made at the start of their course.

The Institute's written and practical guiding examinations, although conducted in English, are not designed to assess linguistic ability. Non-English speakers are given extra time to complete written papers and may use dictionaries. Similarly, grammatical or pronunciation errors by non-English speakers are not penalised in the practical examinations.

## Academic Criteria for Language Examinations

The Institute has determined that in order to guide in a foreign language, guides' speaking proficiency should meet the C1 level as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In order to guide in English, guides are required to meet the C2 level for speaking proficiency as defined by the CEFR. C2 is the highest level of fluency and guides whose first language is not English should consider whether there will be sufficient work available in their language if they are unable to qualify in a supplementary language. It is important that all prospective students understand the realities of their chosen language market before committing to the expense of a course and the exams.

More information about these widely accepted industry standards may be found at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-3-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-qualitative-aspects-of-spoken-language-use>.

The Institute uses an examination which is specifically focused on assessing a Candidate's speaking skills. The Institute does not recognise any other language qualification. The examination is conducted remotely over the telephone and can be booked online at a time to suit the Candidate. Further information can be found on the Institute's website.

Successful Candidates will receive online certificates, and their qualification will be recorded in the Institute's database and included on their membership card.

## **Bilingualism**

Institute language policy is based on the concept of an individual's "first language". This is generally the language in which an individual was raised and educated, and in which they work. It is rare for an individual to have more than one "first language".

When enrolling for a Green or Blue Badge Institute approved course, Candidates are asked to declare their first language or whether they are bilingual (or indeed multilingual). It is the course director's responsibility to appropriately verify these declarations.

Candidates who register as bilingual or multilingual will generally have grown up speaking more than one language so that they are fluent in each. However, they will generally have a stronger language, usually the one in which they completed their education. Institute policy requires that any Candidate who is or claims to be bilingual or multilingual must declare at the outset which is their strongest "first language". Their Course Director is responsible for assessing whether this declaration is accurate. They will then qualify to guide in that language and must complete the Institute's recognised examinations before they may guide in any other language.

Candidates who register as bilingual or multilingual in more than one UK language (currently English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic) will be subject to alternative language verification procedures and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **Use of dictionaries in written examinations**

Dictionaries may be used in Institute written examinations by Candidates whose first language is not English. Such Candidates will be entitled to an additional 15 minutes per hour (25%).

Dictionaries should not contain 'encyclopaedic' information e.g. lists of Prime Ministers, geographical information.

Dictionaries to be used in the examination may be checked by the Invigilator to ensure that they are non-encyclopaedic and that no unauthorised information, such as notes or revision data, have been enclosed within or written on the pages of the dictionary.

The regulations for the use of dictionaries must be adhered to. Failure to do so can lead to the disqualification of the Candidate.