

English Language Provision for New Arrivals from Hong Kong

Part 2: A Guide for Hong Kong New Arrivals
January 2022



Introduction

The resource is for people from Hong Kong who have recently arrived in the UK. Its aim is to support your understanding of different opportunities to learn English and how to access different provision.

South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) works with local authorities/councils in the South East to help with welcoming and supporting new arrivals from Hong Kong in their areas.

As part of this role, SESPM have commissioned Learning and Work Institute (L&W) to develop this resource, as [regional ESOL co-ordinator](#) for the South East.

This resource includes information on who can learn English, HKBN(O) rights and eligibilities in accessing English education. It is for new arrivals from Hong Kong.

This is Part 2 of guidance on English Language provision for new arrivals from Hong Kong. Part 1 of the resource is a separate document for Local Authorities.

Who can learn English?

English language courses for people settled in the UK are usually called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). People arriving in the UK on different entry visa routes are generally not restricted from accessing education and learning as part of their visa conditions.

Restrictions are mainly about having an entitlement to free English lessons. How much you need to pay (and if you are eligible to free or partial learning) is determined by the funding criteria. This can be related to your:

- Age
- Qualification level / type – this could be about your existing qualification or the one that you wish to study for.
- Immigration Status – Visa
- Residence requirements
- Employments Status
- Income
- Welfare benefits status

Your immigration status/visa

Most new arrivals from Hong Kong are likely to have the HKBN(O) visa. Other immigration routes are used by fewer people from Hong Kong.

Your immigration status/visa will impact on your rights and eligibilities including English language learning opportunities.

This resource contains information about eligibility to ESOL for people who:

- Have HKBN(O) visa – the same rules apply to the main visa holder and adult dependants
- Are Asylum Seekers
- Have been granted 'Leave Outside the Rules' - LOTR
- Have arrived on the Youth Mobility Scheme
- Have an International Students visa
- Have a Skilled Worker visa

HKBN(O) visa rights and eligibilities

If you have this visa, you and your dependents have:

- Right to work, rent and access NHS
- [No recourse to public funds \(NRPF\)](#) - meaning you cannot claim welfare benefits or help with money for housing and homelessness. You can apply to remove the condition preventing access to public funds, should you be at risk of destitution.
- Not eligible to access [student finance](#) to cover university costs, subject to [international fees](#)
- Eligible for 15h of [free childcare](#) for 3 and 4 years old only
- After 5 years in the UK, they will be able to apply for settlement, followed by British citizenship after a further 12 months.

Where can you get advice and support about ESOL and other learning?

If you need support to explore your work and study options in the UK you may benefit from impartial support.

This may be referred to as IAG – Information, Advice and Guidance. It may be available at the local college or through the National Careers Service.

The National Careers Service provides careers information, advice and guidance to help with decisions on learning, training and work at all stages in your career. You can talk to someone over the telephone, via email or in person. You can find out more about this on their website.

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

You can also contact your regional strategic migration partnership – in the South East this is SESPM - <https://southeastspm.org.uk/>

How can you find ESOL courses?

You can find more information on where to access local authority provided ESOL for HK BNO visa holders along with other VCSE and diaspora organisations you can receive support from on this interactive map: <https://southeastspm.org.uk/hk-bnos/hk-bnos-2/>

For a map with details on private and other forms of ESOL providers in the South East please see this interactive ESOL map: <https://learningandwork.org.uk/south-east-esol-providers-map/>

You can search for courses in your area on the National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course/search>

Your local authority's website may have information.

You can also check with your local college or university.

Local community groups may also have information.

Where can you study ESOL?

There are many different organisations that provide opportunities to learn English.

Some opportunities offer more formal learning that usually leads to qualifications. Some are less formal – such as conversation classes.

You can learn English in different places. Some organisations also offer online classes or learning materials.

Further Education (FE) colleges – learning may take place on the college campus and/or in different community based venues

Adult Education Centres – learning may take place at different venues. Some may be designated adult learning venues or they can be other settings – see below.

Voluntary and community organisations and venues such as libraries, children's centres, migrant community organisations, churches/church halls.

Private English Language Schools

Other training providers – e.g. local university

HKBN(O) visa holders' access to further education and training for adults

Adult Education Budget (AEB) is the government funding for adult further education and training, including ESOL however this is not accessible for HK BNO visa holders until they have been in the UK for 3 years.

In the [Welcome Pack](#) for people with HKBN(O) visa, the government states that:

- You will be eligible to access further education and training, including English language (ESOL) courses, funded through the [Adult Education Budget](#) (AEB) if you are aged over 19 and meet the **eligibility criteria**.
- The AEB eligibility criteria includes the requirement that you have lived in the UK for 3 years prior to joining the course (3-year ordinary residency requirement).

The government has made available funding for ESOL for people with HKBN(O) visa. The Hong Kong Welcome Programme - ESOL funding is administered by local authorities. This funding cannot be claimed by or paid to individuals. The course or college will have the funding and you will attend for free or part-cost.

- If you have a HKBN(O) visa, you are eligible for ESOL/English language learning funded through **Hong Kong Welcome Programme - ESOL funding – please see the map** <https://southeastspm.org.uk/hk-bnos/hk-bnos-2/> for local authority contacts for this ESOL.

It is also worth checking with your local ESOL providers to see what is available. ESOL providers, including FE colleges and local authority Adult Education Centres, use different sources of funding for ESOL classes so it is possible other ESOL might be available.

If Government-funded ESOL provision is not available to you, other options include paying for private provision, or accessing free provision through voluntary sector organisations.

Entitlement to fully funded education

Fully funded means free for the learner.

Children aged under 18 can who are part of a family entering or residing in the UK under the immigration route for British National (Overseas) citizens and their dependants, are entitled to study at a state-funded or independent school.

The legal entitlement to education and training allows learners to be fully funded who are aged:

- 19 and over, who have not achieved a grade 4 (legacy grade C), or higher, and study for a qualification in English (NB not ESOL) or maths up to and including level 2 and/or
- 19 to 23, if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3
- 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1

Providing evidence of your visa

To assess eligibility, a learning provider will ask you to provide evidence of your visa when accessing ESOL and other learning. You can do so by showing your visa - the biometric residence permit card or stamp in a passport or by sharing a digital status.

While they need to see it, providers do not need a copy of the visa. They should not ask for or make a copy of your documents.

You may also be asked for evidence of benefits and earnings. For example, if you are working, you will be asked to show your pay slips.

Other types of English Language Learning

English language in schools and for further study

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

If your children are in primary or secondary school, they may need EAL support to participate and progress in learning. EAL is used to describe a diverse and heterogeneous group of learners who speak English as an Additional Language.

Young people aged 16 – 19 can access ESOL provision in FE colleges, and/or may be able to learn English alongside other vocational and technical education courses.

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing

System. IELTS training is an internationally recognised system for testing English language ability in four categories: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. It is for people who are looking to study or work in an English-speaking environment

If you are joining a course at a college or university you may need to undertake a pre- sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. EAP will help you develop your English and academic/independent study skills in order to be more successful in your main course.

To prepare for the EAP, IELTS or another test/qualification, you can study on ESOL or EFL either via private language schools or via Further Education (FE) colleges.

To join some college/university courses or to obtain recognition for a professional standing/skills/qualification you may be asked to achieve IELTS at higher levels (or another recognised exam).

English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

EAP are courses for students who wish to study at a college or a university.

EAP courses focus on English language and study skills to prepare you for your academic study. The course might include: academic reading and writing, listening comprehension, speaking skills, language development.

EAP usually take place at a college or a university where you wish to study.

The university might require you to take an EAP course before starting a degree course, or a student might decide to take such a course if they have previously been educated in a non-English speaking country.

EAP might be offered alongside other study skills courses to prepare students for learning in a new context.

EAP typically lasts for 4 full time weeks before the main course starts - but longer courses might also be offered alongside full-time study.

Informal learning and conversation classes

Informal learning and conversation classes are helpful for learners with different level of English and different learning needs.

These classes are usually free to learner and are often run by volunteers. Volunteers are sometimes but not always qualified teacher.

Conversations clubs/groups or classes can be varied in focus, location and size and can include 1:1 sessions: For example, they can include:

- a weekly local coffee morning conversation class
- a group or one-to-one conversation to help with developing professional English language skills or
- a group or one-to-one conversation to learn/practice everyday English in the workplace – conventions around appropriate communications in (different) workplace settings.

One to one English conversation practice can be done by telephone.

Activities, workbooks and exercises can be created and shared over WhatsApp or email.

For those with basic literacy skills who have access to a phone, learning can continue by way of setting up regular video calls to carry out some English language activities.

What is the difference between ESOL, EFL, AEP and GCSE?

ESOL means English for Speakers of Other Languages.

ESOL courses are for anyone whose first language is not English to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

ESOL is for people who are already in the UK and it is generally delivered to adults.

There is government funding for ESOL – this means that some learners do not have to pay if they can be fully funded. Some learners have to pay some of the cost because they are co-funded. Some learners are not eligible for the funding and have to pay full fees.

Not all ESOL is government funded. There are usually a number of ESOL providers offering a range of courses: some for free or at a low-cost.

Some providers also offer courses irrespective of immigration status or benefit entitlement.

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

EFL courses are not generally funded by the government.

These courses are typically associated with fee paying private providers. Some FE and HE providers also offer fee paying EFL. One example of this in the SE region is Chichester College

EFL is typically associated with young people coming to the UK to learn English or business people within or coming to the UK.

EFL typically leads to exams for international English language qualifications such as Cambridge Certificate.

GCSE English

GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) study courses and examination can be taken in a wide range of subjects including English language. Generally, these exams are taken at school by young people aged around 16. To progress to Sixth Form or other Further Education a minimum number of GCSE qualifications at specified grades may be required. The grading system changed recently to 1 - 9, where 9 is the highest.

Adults sometimes decide to study for and take GCSE English or Maths to enable them to progress to other learning or work-related training for example. Some jobs also require these qualifications or an equivalent.

Private training and education providers

This refers to privately funded (paid by learners or their sponsors) learning provision within different settings including universities and FE colleges.

In the South East particularly, private education providers include many private language schools.

If you are wishing and able to pay a fee you can find out about privately run English language courses via the British Council - [Learn English | British Council](#)

Private language schools offer different courses and exams:

- English for Life

- English for Cambridge Exams

- Professional English e.g., English for business

- IELTS - the International English Language Testing System ,

Fees can differ – from about £10 per hour of teaching. Other fees such as registration fee, course materials or exam would also apply.

Information about different courses, locations and fees can be found on this link - <https://www.languageinternational.co.uk/english-schools-uk> -

Access to English Language Education

How can you learn English?

ESOL Learning can be:

Digital learning / Online / App

Attend classes at the course venue such as a college or adult education centre

Hybrid – a mixture of online and at a venue

You can study towards a qualification

Learning opportunities can be formal courses or informal like conversation sessions

How will you know which course level is for you?

You may already have an English language qualification

Before joining a course, you will need to undertake an initial assessment – this can be online or at a college or learning centre.

The initial assessment will assess your English language for the following skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening.

This will help to know what level course is appropriate for you. If a provider does not have a suitable course for you, they may be able to signpost you to other providers.

How will you know which course is suitable for your needs?

You may wish to study for different reasons:

- To improve your everyday English language skills
- To join a course of study that requires a proof of English and qualification
- To look for or to start work or obtain professional qualification
- To apply for settled status/citizenship - As per the current rules, after residing in the UK for five years, applicants applying for indefinite leave to remain will have to show English language ability to level B1 as specified in the [Immigration Rules](#).

The level of English language skills required for some courses, jobs and in particular for professional reorientation are often specified by providers of training and/or regulatory bodies. The International English Language Test System (IELTS) and the Occupational English Test (OET) are often chosen to test the language competency of healthcare professionals in the UK.

For example, nurses and midwives who wish to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council are required to evidence their ability to communicate effectively in English by providing an IELTS certificate or an OET certificate that confirm that they have passed the tests at a required level.'

Resources for learning English online

[Open University offers a number of free courses that can be accessed online](#). Courses cover a wide range of subjects, from English skills for life and supporting children's mental health and well-being, to the importance of interpersonal skills and planning a better future.

Free Online English Class for Hongkongers in the UK <https://www.hongkongers.org.uk/free-online-english-class>

[Excellence Gateway website](#)- with free resources for learners, with videos, listening activities, texts and grammar exercises for ESOL learners at every level. Videos are also available on their [YouTube channel](#).

[Mayor of London, London Assembly website](#)- contains a very comprehensive list of resources for learning English online. This is one example of a list of free: [ESOL Study at Home resources](#).

Other resources

Prince's Trust is a charity helping young people up to the age of 30 get into jobs, education and training, including setting up their own business. Support is free and available across the UK. For more information, see the [Prince's Trust 'Opportunities near me' page](#), call 0800 842842 or use the [Princes Trust online chat](#).

The British Council has several resources for English learners:

- [Study English in the UK](#) – for finding information about British Council-accredited courses in the UK.
- If you are a parent or carer, [Learn English Kids](#) and [Learn English Teens](#) are British Council websites for younger English language learners.
- Information about the [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#) examinations.

[Hongkongers in Britain](#) a civil society organisation established in 2020. It's an expat diaspora and community-building group, whose objectives are to provide assistance, advice and support for the Hongkonger community, enabling them to settle, integrate, and contribute towards the UK society.

[Challenges of Integrating a High Potential Workforce](#) - HKB Survey Report on Work and Employment for recently arrived Hongkongers in the UK, October 2021 HKB Survey Report on Work and Employment for Recently Arrived Hongkongers in the UK

Other resources

[Hong Kong Nursing Association UK](#) – Information on healthcare professionals employment and professional orientation support, pastoral care, and support for nurses from Hong Kong.

For other healthcare professionals, such as doctors or one of the Allied Health Professionals e.g. physiotherapist, dietitian or podiatrist, people from Hong Kong can contact Florence Cattle, an International Recruitment Lead for NHS England. Her email address is f.cattle@nhs.net.

[The Right to Remain Toolkit](#) - A guide to the UK immigration and asylum system Useful for understanding different visas and immigration categories. A step-by-step guide to the UK asylum and immigration system. It is free to use, and it's for people who want to learn more about the legal process, or a particular part of the legal process. Key sections of the guide are translated into other languages.

[Universities of Sanctuary](#) A campaign to inspire and support universities to offer opportunities to people who are sanctuary seekers, includes asylum seekers and refugees. Website includes a list and a link to universities which are part of the network. The opportunities offered, differ from one institution to another. Some universities offer English courses to prepare for HE study.

Other resources

[School admissions](#) - "Guidance on School admissions: applications for overseas children - How local authorities and admission authorities should process applications from foreign nationals, or from another country, for a state-funded school place in England." It states that: "Children aged under 18 can enter the UK, as a dependant of a foreign national who has settled status in the UK, as a dependant of their parent(s) who are in the UK on a work visa or Student visa, or who are part of a family entering or residing in the UK under the immigration route for British National (Overseas) citizens and their dependants.

These dependent children are entitled to enter the country and can study at a state-funded or independent school once in the UK. '

[OpenLearn](#) Produced by The Open University, a leader in open and distance learning: all OpenLearn courses are free to study. They offer nearly 1000 free courses across 8 different subject areas. The courses are available to start right away. (Main Open University courses are not free and are subject to the usual fees and restrictions.)

[National Careers Service](#) Provides careers information, advice and guidance. This service can help you to make decisions on learning, training and work at all stages in your career. This service is available to people who live in England.

[VIVA MUNDO](#) Offers a very good overview of different international English language qualifications

Other resources

[Welcome HK–Brits](#) Welcome HK–Brits has lots of bilingual resources covering different aspects of life in the UK.

[Cambridge English, Exams and tests, International language standards](#) "About the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other exams in their country."

[Welcome: a guide for Hong Kong British National \(Overseas\) visa holders in the UK](#) This guide is for adults and dependants who have been granted leave on the new British National (Overseas) visa to access public services and make the most of the opportunities in the UK. It is published in 2021 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government