

Eligibility criteria for students seeking English as Additional Language (EAL) Status

Students who are unfamiliar with the English language because they are from non-English-speaking backgrounds or who are hearing impaired may have access to English as an Additional Language (EAL) status.

To apply for EAL status, each student is required to submit an Application for Enrolment in English as an Additional Language Units 3 and 4 form to the school, please see the link below.

A student may be eligible for EAL status if they meet both of the following conditions:

- They have been a resident in Australia or New Zealand or other predominantly English-speaking country for not more than seven years over the period of their education NOTE: The period of seven years is to be calculated cumulatively over the student's whole life.
- English has been the student's major language of instruction for a total period of not more than seven years over the period of their education.

OR:

- they are a student of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent whose first language is not English.

OR:

- they have a hearing impairment (must produce evidence of hearing loss of 60 decibels or greater in their better ear.)

EAL applications for students whose country of origin is Singapore or India must be submitted to the VCAA for assessment with supporting documentation.

Schools cannot approve these students.

Other special circumstances for EAL status that may be considered by the VCAA in determining a student's eligibility for EAL status include:

- minimal or no primary school education
- material interruptions to schooling during primary years, particularly if there were changes to the language of instruction
- material interruptions to schooling after arrival in Australia.

Please refer to the [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook section – Administrative information: Student enrolment, Students seeking EAL status](#). Please see the  [enrolment application form](#).

English as an Additional Language

Enrolment in EAL is available only to students who have approved EAL status. A student may be eligible for EAL status if they:

have been a resident in Australia, New Zealand or other predominantly English-speaking country for no more than seven years (and they have arrived in Australia after 1 January 2013) (Note: The period of seven years is to be calculated cumulatively over the student's whole life. The calculation of time spent in Australia is made from the date of last arrival plus any previous periods of time spent in Australia or any predominantly English-speaking country. Time spent out of Australia during school vacations should be included in the accumulation towards the seven years because there would have been no disruption to education during these periods.)

they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and their first language is not English

have received English as their major language of instruction for a total period of not more than seven years over the period of their education.

2.1 Students seeking EAL status

As the satisfactory completion of an English study is a compulsory requirement for achieving the VCE, students who are unfamiliar with the English language because they are from non-English-speaking backgrounds or who are hearing impaired may have access to EAL status. Students applying for EAL status should indicate this on their **VCE and VCAL Student Personal Details** form. Identifying a student as having EAL status does not automatically enrol the student in EAL.

Students who complete Bridging EAL, which is available only as Units 1 and 2, are not automatically considered eligible for EAL status for Units 3 and 4 of EAL.

Students from a non-English-speaking background

To apply for EAL status, each student is required to submit an **Application for Enrolment in English as an Additional Language Units 3 and 4** form to the school. This is designed to assist schools in evaluating a student's EAL status. Schools should maintain a record of all completed applications. Schools should not enrol a student in EAL unless they have received all documentation verifying that the student meets the EAL eligibility criteria.

A student may be eligible for EAL status if they meet two criteria.

For Criterion 1, the student must fit one of the following:

On the first day of the calendar year, the student must not have been a resident in Australia or New Zealand or other predominantly English-speaking country for more than seven years. The period of seven years is to be calculated cumulatively over the student's whole life. The calculation of time spent in Australia is made from the date of last arrival plus any previous periods of time spent in Australia or any predominantly English-speaking country. This calculation of time should not include time spent out of Australia during school vacations.

The student is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person whose first language is not English.

For Criterion 2, the student must fit the following:

English has been the student's major language of instruction for a total period of not more than seven years over the period of their education. Schools must sight the student's overseas school reports to confirm that the language of instruction was not English during this period.

Special circumstances for EAL status

There are special circumstances that may be considered by the VCAA in determining a student's eligibility for EAL status, including:

minimal or no primary school education

material interruptions to schooling during primary years, particularly if there were changes to the language of instruction

material interruptions to schooling after arrival in Australia.

Circumstances not considered for EAL status

The following are not grounds for a special application for EAL status:

the language spoken in the student's home

the standard of the student's spoken and written English

the failure of the student's school to provide EAL assistance to the student.

Determinations about EAL status

If a student clearly meets the conditions, the principal has the authority to grant this provision. Such applications should not be sent to the VCAA; they should be retained on the school file.

If a decision is not clear, the principal may apply to the VCAA for a determination using the **Application for Enrolment in English as an Additional Language Units 3 and 4** form. Only if a determination is sought from the VCAA should the completed application form, together with all supporting documentation, be forwarded to the Student Records and Results Unit as soon as possible.

Students who have resided and studied in Singapore or India

VASS disables EAL approval for students whose country of origin is Singapore or India, even though the student may have resided in Australia for less than seven years. A message on VASS will appear, stating 'EAL eligibility for this country of origin can only be approved by the VCAA'. The school must forward the application to the VCAA for a thorough assessment. These applications need to include supporting school documentation and passport stamp and/or International Movement Records, to determine whether the student is eligible for EAL. If the application is reviewed by the VCAA, and the approval granted, it will be entered on VASS and the school will be able to enrol the student in EAL.

Students with hearing impairment

Students seeking EAL status on the grounds of hearing impairment must:

produce evidence of a hearing test administered by the Australian Government Hearing Services Program, or an equivalent body, not more than two calendar years before the year of enrolment in a Unit 3–4 sequence.

The audiogram and accompanying report submitted must show that the student has a hearing loss of 60 decibels or greater in their better ear. Other aspects of hearing loss, such as issues relating to sound frequencies, should be noted in the report. The report should be written in an accessible language, with the implications of the audiogram results clearly explained

have been ascertained by the Visiting Teacher Service as being eligible for assistance on the basis of hearing impairment, or be enrolled in a school for the hearing impaired or a recognised unit or facility for the hearing impaired attached to a regular school.

Schools can make decisions about the eligibility of a hearing-impaired student for EAL status on the basis of these criteria. If necessary, advice may be sought from the Student Records and Results Unit.

If the principal has approved the student's application, their status can be entered on VASS. If the principal is uncertain about a student's eligibility, they should apply to the VCAA using the **Application for Enrolment in English as an Additional Language Units 3 and 4** form. All evidence as described in the eligibility criteria must be supplied with the application.

To satisfy the requirements of English or EAL, students with a hearing impairment may undertake an alternative assessment task to the one specified in the English/EAL study design. For those students who have a hearing impairment and have a limited capacity for oral communication, an alternative may be a data presentation (for example, using Microsoft PowerPoint) or a presentation using signing, which is translated into speech by an interpreter.

School-based arrangements for EAL

Studies have been designed so teachers can develop courses appropriate to the needs of their students. The flexibility in the study design should be used to take account of a student's comparative unfamiliarity with the English language.