



14 April 2014

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## Information Circular

Subject: **Language Proficiency Examinations\***

The purpose of the present circular is to invite applications from staff members who wish to take the Language Proficiency Examination (LPE) in any of the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), in accordance with the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/1999/2, section 3.

The purpose of the examination is to test staff members' written and spoken knowledge of the language. Staff members who pass one or more examinations may qualify for language-related incentives. Applicants whose mother tongue is one of the official languages of the United Nations cannot take the LPE in that language.

### 1. Dates of the examination

Language Proficiency Examinations will be held on **9 and 10 September 2014**.

- LPE in English, Russian and Chinese: 9 September 2014.
- LPE in French, Spanish and Arabic: 10 September 2014.

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\* For non United Nations Secretariat staff members: this circular must be read in conjunction with the internal policy and practice of your organization.

a) Time and location of the written examination

The written examination will be held on the following dates:

**Tuesday, 9 September 2014**

Chinese	14:00-18:30
English	14:00-18:30
Russian	14:00-18:30

**Wednesday, 10 September 2014**

Arabic	14:00-18:30
French	14:00-18:30
Spanish	14:00-18:30

Candidates are advised to arrive between 30 and 60 minutes before the beginning of the written examination to allow time for check-in procedures.

b) Time and location of the oral examination

Candidates will be notified of the date, time and location of their oral examination by email. Candidates should take the necessary measures to be available as they will not be allowed to change interview appointments, except for compelling reasons.

**2. Registration period**

Registration period will be from 14 April to 9 May 2014 and will be done online by CANDIDATES themselves.

**3. Enrolment**

All candidates/applicants are invited to enrol through Inspira (<https://inspira.un.org>). Video tutorials are available on the following link: [http://www.un.org/exam/lpe/cand\\_videoguide/main.asp](http://www.un.org/exam/lpe/cand_videoguide/main.asp).

**4. Requirements to enroll for the examination**

**4.1 Eligibility**

**a) United Nations Secretariat/Specialized Agencies staff members**

To be permitted to enrol for the examination, staff members need to have completed the highest level of the UNOG language training programme. Students who have not finished the highest level at the time of the examination will not be permitted to sit this examination.

Alternatively, staff members who have achieved proficiency by studying the language outside the United Nations for at least two years or were/are required to use the language on a regular basis for school or work are also eligible. They will need to provide full details about their language acquisition (intensive studies, regular use at school or work) in their application.

Examples of valid sources of language supporting documents:

- Completed the highest level in the UN Language Training Programme or a programme endorsed by the UN: Certificate if one was issued.
- Completed language study outside the UN for at least 2 years in the past 5 years: Language course certificate.
- Uses the language on a regular basis for work: Letter from staff member's supervisor stating language is used on a regular basis.
- Used the language on a regular basis for school: School curriculum or certificate indicating language used

**b) Non-United Nations staff members/non-Specialized Agencies staff members**

Non-United Nations Secretariat/non-Specialized Agencies staff members (i.e. staff members of permanent missions, service organizations in the Palais des Nations, NGOs, press corps, consultants and dependents of staff or of diplomatic mission staff) are only eligible if they have completed the highest level of the UNOG language programme.

#### **4.2 Type of appointment**

Permanent and probationary appointments: All staff members of the organizations of the United Nations system who have a permanent or a probationary appointment are eligible to take the LPE provided that they meet the eligibility criteria specified above.

When enrolling online through Inspira, candidates will have to upload a document which states their name, type of appointment and expiry date of appointment.

Fixed-term appointments: United Nations staff members and staff members of Specialized Agencies who have fixed-term appointments are eligible to take the LPE, provided that their contract expiration date is after the date of the Language Proficiency Examination for which they are applying. United Nations staff members whose contract expires before this date must obtain authorization from their chief and

staff members of other Specialized Agencies must obtain the authorization from their organization.

When enrolling online through Inspira, candidates will have to upload a document which states their name, type of appointment and expiry date of appointment.

If their appointment expires prior to the date of the LPE, they will also be required to attach an authorization letter from their Executive Officer or Head of Administration.

Short-term appointments: United Nations staff members who hold short-term appointments are not eligible to take the LPE unless they obtain authorization from the Chief of Personnel Service.

When enrolling online through Inspira, candidates will have to upload a document which states their name, type of appointment and expiry date of appointment.

If their appointment expires prior to the date of the LPE, they will also be required to attach an authorization letter from their Executive Officer or Head of Administration.

## **5. Information about the examination**

The Language Proficiency Examination consists of a written test and an oral interview. The written test consists of a composition and a series of multiple-choice questions covering listening comprehension, reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar.

The total time for the written part is 3 hours 10 minutes. The oral part consists of a one-on-one 15 minute interview.

The Language Proficiency Examination is a paper based test, using an answer sheet provided to each examinee prior to the beginning of the test. The answer sheet consists of two double sided pages where examinees will record their answers to both parts of the written examinations. The composition should be written, with black or blue ballpoint pen, on the pages labelled "essay" of the answer sheet. Examinees will not be provided with additional pages. All answers to the multiple choice part must be marked on the answer sheet by filling in the bubbles corresponding to each answer. Failure to complete the form correctly - i.e. improper filling of the bubbles or making additional marks on the answer sheet - will automatically entail in faulty results and will not be re-evaluated by the Board of Examiners.

Examinees are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the filling in of the answer sheet prior to the test. To this effect, a sample blank answer sheet as well as a properly filled answer sheet can be

consulted on the LPE website. Samples of previous LPE exams are available in all 6 languages on the LPE website: <http://www.un.org/exam/lpe>

## **6. Requirements for passing the Language Proficiency Examination**

A minimum score of 65 per cent in both parts shall be required for a passing grade. Where examinees receive a score of 80 per cent or more on the written examination but fail the oral, the jury adjudicating the examination shall review the case and may allow candidates to retain their written score for the following examination session. In this event, the candidate shall receive written notification of the jury's decision and will be required to apply to retake the oral examination only at the following session.

Examinees who receive 80 per cent or more on the oral part but fail the written part and candidates who have taken only one part of the examination at one session shall retake both the written and oral parts at a subsequent session.

Examinees will receive written notification of their examination results. No results will be available prior to the official release date.

## **7. Fees**

### **7.1 United Nations Secretariat staff members**

For United Nations Secretariat staff members, the examination cost is covered by the organization the candidate works for.

### **7.2 Non-United Nations Secretariat staff members**

a) Dependents of United Nations Secretariat staff members and dependents of Specialized Agencies staff members, service organizations in the Palais des Nations, NGOs, press corps and consultants who have completed the last level of the United Nations Language Training Programme must pay a fee of 241 Swiss francs\*. The fee of 241 Swiss francs is due at the time of enrolment and will not be refunded in case of non-participation or in case of absence whether justified or not.

b) Staff members of permanent missions and their dependents and Specialized Agency staff members must pay a fee of 64 Swiss francs corresponding to the local costs of the administration of the

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\* US\$ 200.- (at the official exchange rate of April 2014) for the work done by the Office of Human Resources Management in New York, plus 64 Swiss francs corresponding to the local administrative costs of the examination.

examination. They are requested to contact their respective administration to inquire if and how the additional cost of US\$ 200 (due to New York and representing the administrative costs of the examination at UN Headquarters) will be charged to them. **The fee of 64 Swiss francs is due at the time of enrolment and will not be refunded in case of non-participation or in case of absence whether justified or not.**

### **7.3 Methods of payment**

Proof of payment, if required (points 7.2 a) and 7.2 b)), must be uploaded on Inspira at time of registration. Failure to do so will result in your application not being accepted.

Payment can be made as follows:

1) By *bulletin de versement* at any office of the Swiss Postal Services (PTT):

United Nations Geneva, Special Accounts, PTT Account number 12-5904-2. Please indicate ZEB in the box *motif versement*.

2) Via e-Banking:

PTT BAN No. CH40 0900 0000 1200 5904 2

United Nations Geneva, Special Accounts, Division des Finances, 1202 Genève. Please indicate ZEB in the box *motif versement*.

## **8. Language incentive eligibility requirements for United Nations Secretariat staff members**

a) A staff member may take the language proficiency examination to obtain a certificate establishing proficiency in a second official language and, in certain cases:

i) To benefit from the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII);

ii) To qualify for the first or second language allowance under staff rule 103.6.

b) Resolution 2480 B (XXIII) applies to Professional and higher level staff members subject to geographical distribution who work in one of the working languages of the Secretariat and who have an adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language. The criteria for benefiting from the language incentives provided for under the resolution are set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/207 of 23 December 1971.

c) Under staff rule 3.8 staff members in the General Service, Trades and Crafts categories or in the Field Service below level 6 are eligible

for language allowances. Staff members must be proficient in two official languages and must pass the LPE in one of them to receive the allowance. To receive a second language allowance they must be proficient in three official languages and must pass the LPE in two of them. Staff members whose mother tongue is an official language of the Organization must pass the examination in another official language, which may be the language in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment. The LPE in their mother tongue is waived. Staff members whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages must pass the examination in an official language other than that in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment. The LPE in that language is waived.

#### **9. Important - Security measures at the Palais des Nations**

LPE candidates who are staff members of specialized agencies or diplomatic missions and who wish to enter the grounds of the Palais des Nations (on the days of their examinations) by motorized vehicle will need to obtain a visitors parking badge (T3).

This badge can be obtained, by the exam candidate, from the Security and Safety Section at the Pregny Gate, telephone: 022/917 2900, upon presentation of their letter of convocation and relevant security documents (i.e., ID badge, *carte grise* and car insurance papers).

For United Nations staff members working off-site (i.e., Palais Wilson, IEH, ICC, UNHCR) this authorization can be obtained from the security desk in their respective organization/annex. It is obtainable upon presentation of their letter of convocation and relevant security documents (i.e., ID badge, *carte grise* and car insurance papers).

Candidates are strongly advised to maximise their use of public transport and shuttle services when coming to the examination.

(Signed) Clemens M. Adams  
Director, Division of Administration