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978-1-107-03278-1 - Standards of English in Higher Education: Issues, Challenges and Strategies

Neil Murray

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## Standards of English in Higher Education

The student demographic of universities today has changed quite dramatically from even a decade ago. As universities seek to internationalise, widen participation and derive attendant reputational and financial benefits, along with greater opportunities for research collaborations and industry links, they also face a growing challenge associated with what Neil Murray terms ‘the English language question’. In particular, as the proportion of students of non-English speaking backgrounds entering universities increases, there is growing concern over levels of language proficiency and what this can mean for educational standards, the student experience and, ultimately, institutional standing. *Standards of English in Higher Education: Issues, Challenges and Strategies* unpacks a number of key and interrelated issues – for example, the assessment of proficiency and the structure and nature of provision – that bear on the question of English language standards and in doing so offers a frank critical appraisal of English language in higher education today.

- \* Draws together in a single volume a number of key and interrelated issues around English language proficiency in today’s higher education context.
- \* Provides a framework for ongoing discussion and debate on a critical area in higher education.
- \* Highlights the potential tension between the maintenance of educational standards in higher education and the need to reflect an international orientation, widen participation and maintain financial buoyancy.

Neil Murray is Reader in Applied Linguistics at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, the University of Warwick, UK, and adjunct member of the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures at the University of South Australia, where he was previously Head of Language and Literacy.

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For Henry Widdowson  
in modest thanks for his sheer inspiration over the years,  
and for bringing applied linguistics to life for me  
and for so many others in his inimitable way

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AEI	Australian Education International
ATAS	Academic Technology Approval Scheme
AUQ	Australian Universities Quality Agency
BALEAP	British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
BUTEX	British Universities Transatlantic Exchange Association
CAE	Cambridge English Advanced
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CPE	Cambridge English: Proficiency
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIAC	Department of Immigration And Citizenship
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELP	English Language Proficiency
ESB	English-Speaking Background
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FE	Further Education
GPPs	Good Practice Principles
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IEAA	International Education Association of Australia
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LOTE	Language Other Than English
NCES	National Centre for Education Statistics
NEON	National Education Opportunities Network
NESB	Non-English-Speaking Background

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NZREX	New Zealand Registration Examination
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OET	Occupational English Test
OFFA	Office For Fair Access
PLAB	Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board
PTE	Pearson Test of English
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RMP	Researcher Mobility Programme
SELT	Secure English Language Test
SES	Socio-Economic Status
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL iBT	TOEFL Internet-Based Test
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
UKIERI	UK–India Education and Research Initiative
UKVI	United Kingdom Visas and Immigration
WUN	World Universities Network