

WHY English General/English Language is IMPORTANT

As explained to you in orientation when you joined The Lyceum.

COMPETENCE

At University

All English medium colleges and universities, in Pakistan and abroad, value competence in English speaking, writing and comprehension. You will need strong English writing skills to do well in your subjects at the university level. You will not get good grades in your papers if you cannot communicate your ideas effectively. Scientists, how will anyone recognize the brilliance of your discovery if no one can penetrate the prose of your research report to figure out what you have done? How will you present your paper at a conference? It is harder to trust and accept the ideas of someone whose speech and writing are full of basic errors – they sound stupid even if they are not. If English is clearly a difficult second language for the speaker then people can be understanding of mistakes, but they are not forgiving of those who are obviously comfortable and fluent in the spoken language, as you are.

On the Job

Employers value highly the ability to speak and write clearly, compellingly, effectively and grammatically. You will be judged before you even set foot in an office for an interview based on the quality of your written communication – cover letter and resume as well as any other correspondence by e-mail or letter. This goes beyond the ability to distinguish between casual (gr8! c u for the intervumon ☺. (God forbid!)) and formal (Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with me on Monday. I look forward to meeting you. (Not sent by text message.)). You must show them that you write with skill and maturity.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

Excellent command of English is expected by all schools. You think because you can speak fluently that your communication skills are good, but most of you write quite poorly, and your comprehension skills (as reflected by the SAT critical reading scores) are generally weaker and less sophisticated than your peers in the US/UK/Canada.

US – All high school students are expected to take 4 years of English – every year of high school. This is part of the “College Preparatory” curriculum and universities would frown upon its absence. An essay is also required for most US applications, and it is an important part of your application.

Canada – Same as US. Essay usually required for major scholarship but not usually required for admission.

UK – Just because UK universities do not make a grade in AS Level English Language/General a specific part of the entrance requirements does not mean that they do not care about English competence. (Although AS Level English Language can usually be used to meet a requirement for an AS subject.) The fact that your AS General grade is not part of the “offer” simply means that English competence is expected from everyone – why make it a part of the offer if those who don’t have it are not competitive anyway? Besides, they do look at your English when they are reviewing your UCAS statement, and the statement can make or break your chances of admission.

Pakistan – LUMS, IBA and other universities do care about language competence: LUMS has a statement in the application and IBA has added a writing component to their exam.

Even if you got an A* or A on the O Level it doesn’t mean that your skills are strong (sorry, but it’s true), and you will need to work hard on your English. (This is why AS English Language is not offered to everyone; most students’ language skills are not good enough for them to be able to cope with the class.) Also, this is why many schools around the world still require TOEFL/IELTS from students who have taken O Level English Language.

Will your record make a good impression, or will it show that you are LAZY?

Colleges and universities look at the grades that students achieve in ALL of their subjects, not just those that are related to the expected course of study. At university, all students will have some courses that they choose to take and others that they are required to take. Just because a course is required doesn’t make it any less important in the university’s eyes (rather, they are probably more important!). They need to know that you will take ALL of your courses seriously.

Given a choice, why should a university admit students whose records show that they only work hard when they feel like it? And they DO have a choice. They will admit students who commit themselves to doing their best in everything that they do. Show that you are one of these students.