



CAMBRIDGE ESOL NEWS RELEASE

Cambridge leads Westminster discussion on student immigration

Cambridge ESOL “Language at the Border” event held in run up to government review of student immigration procedures.

London 21 January 2010: In the run up to the government’s much anticipated review of student immigration to the UK, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations brought together key experts from the education industry and the UK Border Agency to discuss the issues around assessing the English language levels of students coming to study in the UK.

At the end of last year the Prime Minister ordered a review of Tier 4 – the system that controls the flow of students coming to study in the UK – making this event particularly timely for the 150 delegates from language schools, media and education providers. The forum held in Westminster was themed: *“Language at the Border: Assessing Language Ability for Study in the UK”* and it gave delegates the opportunity to discuss the issue with Suzanne Barnes, Policy Lead for Tier 4 at the UK Border Agency, whose team recently submitted their proposals in response to the Prime Minister’s request last November.

Dr Michael Milanovic, Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL who opened the event explained the importance of this discussion forum:

“When it comes to language testing for student immigration, we must ensure fairness, security and fitness for purpose so that we are respecting the human rights of the individuals going through our immigration process and acting in the best interests of the UK”.

Juliet Wilson, Assistant Director for Customer Services at Cambridge ESOL outlined the importance of a rigorous and secure testing system when assessing language for immigration purposes. She explained Cambridge’s stringent approach to quality assurance and security and how their new online verification service will include a test day photo of the candidate.

Dr Nick Saville who heads up Cambridge ESOL’s Research and Validation function explained the kind of factors that government’s need to consider

when choosing language tests for this purpose – he stressed how seeking professional guidance helps to ensure language assessment for immigration is fair and appropriate.

Other speakers included Tony Millns from English UK and Anne Arnott from the Canadian High Commission who outlined her country's approach to attracting foreign students and Canada's immigration strategy. Michael Carrier from the British Council also briefed delegates on how the English language has helped the UK build closer cultural and economic ties with the rest of the world with examples of notable former students who were educated in this country. Cambridge ESOL was particularly grateful to Suzanne Barnes' presentation on "Tier 4 and English Language Assessment" and her contribution to the panel discussion.

ENDS

Notes:

Language at the border: Assessing Language Ability for Study in the UK was held on 13 January 2010 at The Smeaton Room, One Great George Street, Westminster, London.

About Cambridge ESOL

Cambridge ESOL offers the world's leading range of certificates for learners and teachers of English - taken by over 3 million people in 130 countries. They help people gain entrance to university or college, improve job prospects or measure progress in English. More than 10,000 employers, universities and government bodies around the world recognise Cambridge ESOL qualifications.

Contact the press office:

<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/newsroom/press-room.html#contact>