

ELI Policies and Procedures

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Introduction

Welcome to the English Language Institute (ELI) at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG)!

If you are dreaming of an academic career at a university with instruction in English, this is where your dreams will start coming true. Our highly qualified instructors, state-of-the-art teaching technologies, and learner-centered environment are just a few of the many assets that our school provides. The English Language Institute is a self-sustaining unit at AUBG, designed to offer English language instruction at any level: from absolute "Beginner" to "Advanced," followed by university admission test preparation.

Mission: To empower individuals with the linguistic proficiency and cultural competence needed to thrive in an interconnected world, through innovative English language education.

Objective: To provide English language instruction that equips students with practical skills for academic success, professional growth, and effective communication in global contexts.

Motto: Strengthening Skills, Enhancing Interpersonal Communication.

Applicants

English For Academic Purposes (EAP):

Students who need preparation to apply to AUBG or any other university where English is the language of instruction should apply for the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at ELI. The recommended age limit for this program is between 18 and 25 years old. The EAP is open to both Bulgarian citizens and international applicants. Students apply to the EAP through the Admissions Office application portal.

Community-Oriented Programs:

The Community-Oriented Programs at ELI are designed to be accessible to all Bulgarian citizens and international students. With such a broad client base, ELI registers applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Children's Community-Oriented Program: This program is designed for children aged 7 to 12. They have the opportunity to master English from the absolute beginner to intermediate level using original Cambridge and Oxford University Press materials. Children learn in a relaxed atmosphere that boosts their learning through interactive games, texts, and multimedia devices.

The highly qualified teaching staff, including Bulgarian and (semi-) native speakers, use the newest English Language Teaching (ELT) methods to ensure every student's success. Upon graduating from the final level of the Children's Program, students are fully equipped to continue their education in the Adult Community-Oriented Program.

Adult Community-Oriented Program: This program is designed for individuals aged 14 and older who wish to further their English language knowledge in a learner-centered environment.

The program accommodates students of all proficiency levels, ranging from absolute beginners to advanced learners. Whether learning English for school, fun, or business, these classes aim to give students maximum exposure to the English language in both written and spoken forms. A team of qualified instructors uses textbooks from Oxford University Press, along with a variety of additional materials, to help students acquire the necessary confidence and skills to use English effectively.

Placement

Placement into the correct level course is imperative for students' learning success. ELI is dedicated to helping students succeed, and correct placement is a top priority. Students starting as absolute beginners will be registered immediately into their courses. All other students must take placement tests so ELI can evaluate their language skills and place them in a suitable course. Full-time ELI instructors administer the placement test. The test is used to place students from outside language centers and schools in the appropriate ELI course. There is a charge of EUR 10 for this test, which is paid with the course fee. Previous ELI students are not required to take a placement test if they have successfully completed an ELI course within the last 2 years. After 2 years, it is not recommended that the student register without a placement test as their English proficiency may have changed significantly.

Attendance

All courses start at their specified time. Students are encouraged to attend every class. If a student must be absent from the course for personal and/or medical reasons, it is their responsibility to inform the instructor(s) and arrange to make up all work for the missed classes.

Computer Accounts EAP

Students in the EAP are provided with personal computer accounts by the end of their first week of classes. The ELI EAP Coordinator serves as the liaison between the students and the Information Technology (IT) office. After all students have arranged their registration and payment and have received their ID cards, this information is submitted to the IT office. The IT office then issues accounts with usernames and passwords. Upon receipt of the list of accounts, the EAP Coordinator informs the students that they are ready. The students must then arrange to meet with the EAP Coordinator to sign an agreement to follow the rules for using the computer labs before receiving their usernames and passwords.

ELI Administrative Personnel

Director: Nikolina Radeva – Tel. 073/ 888 556

Assistant Director/ EAP Coordinator: Stanislava Gurova – Tel. 073/ 888 557

Administrative Assistant: Mihail Ivanov – Tel. 073/ 888 555

ELI Full-Time Faculty Offices

ELI Faculty Offices: Tel. 073/ 888 552, 553, 554, 558, 559

ELI Certificate of Completion

Upon the successful completion of an ELI course, a Certificate of Completion is prepared for each student. Each certificate issued by ELI is unique for tracking purposes and to avoid fraudulent copies. The certificate is signed by the language instructors, the ELI Director, and stamped with the seal of AUBG. The certificate is awarded at the final class meeting and should be signed for by the student receiving it. For the Fall/Spring courses, the certificates are issued within a week of the final test. For the Summer courses, they are issued the day after the final test. The certificate cannot be picked up by anyone other than the student.

If the student has outstanding financial obligations or has not returned their ID card, ELI will retain the certificate until all course fees have been settled with the financial office and/ or the ID card returned.

The original certificate presented to students upon the successful completion of the course is prepared on special watermarked security paper. In the event that this copy is lost or misplaced by the student, a basic copy prepared on regular paper will be given as a replacement at no charge. If the student must have a certificate on security paper, a certified copy of their original certificate can be prepared for a price of EUR 20. The new certificate will bear the mark "CERTIFIED COPY" on the face of the document in place of the instructor's signature.

Evaluations

Students are evaluated based on various components, with the main emphasis on the final examination. Attendance is crucial for success in all ELI courses.

Grading Policy

To obtain a certificate from ELI acknowledging the successful completion of any level, a student must achieve at least 60% in the course. The final grade is a combination of attendance, class participation, quizzes, evaluation tests, mid-term test, and final test. Students are responsible for acquainting themselves with the syllabus at the beginning of the term.

Students must contact their instructor or fellow students to find out the homework assignment and come prepared for the next class if they have missed a class. Students who miss any in-class evaluations are responsible for arranging with their instructor(s) to make up the missed material. Only midterm tests can be made up. For excused absences, the make-up exam can be arranged before the absence with the instructor for a convenient time for both the student and the instructor. There will be no deduction of points in these circumstances.

The final test date is fixed. If a student has a valid reason not to take the final test, they have two options:

1. Take a make-up test (on another fixed date), which allows the student to receive a certificate only if they pass the test successfully.
2. Take a final test from the corresponding level at the end of the following semester. In this case, the student is awarded a certificate after successfully passing the final test.

If a student does not successfully complete their chosen course, they may:

- Retake the course.
- Retake the final test only (given at the end of the next semester, the first time for a fee of EUR 10, any time afterward for EUR 20).
- Sit a make-up test and pass it with a minimum of 60%. A make-up test can be taken by students who received between 55% and 59% on their failed final test. This option is available when there is not enough time for the other two options, and the student wishes to continue their studies. The make-up test allows a student to sign up for the next level if they score a minimum of 60%.

Health Care

At ELI, students' health is vitally important. It is the students' responsibility to provide immunization records and to obtain and maintain adequate health insurance while studying at ELI. Bulgarian and international students are under different regulations regarding health insurance. If students have any questions about health coverage or immunizations, they must go directly to the AUBG Health Center as ELI staff are not qualified or obliged to provide this information.

In terms of Bulgarian academic standards, only Bulgarian students who are in degree programs are covered by national health benefits. Since ELI is not a degree-earning program, students are not covered and must have individual health insurance plans covered by their families. International students are required to obtain semester-based health plans through the AUBG Health Center. The health insurance fees are published on the AUBG website and can also be obtained by contacting the AUBG Health Center directly. These are semester-based plans and need to be paid at the beginning of each semester attended at ELI.

Housing

Due to a shortage of space in the AUBG dormitories, rooms are only made available to ELI students on a space-available basis. Priority is given to international students when there are rooms available. Inquiries for available housing should be directed to the Director of Residential Life at 073/888 515.

Intensive Study

ELI provides intensive study of English in an environment conducive to rapid language assimilation. Since instruction at ELI is intensive, students must be prepared to rigorously practice and study English to learn the material within a short time. Students are expected to study and use English in all ELI activities – in class, doing homework, during out-of-class activities, and in everyday life as much as possible. Students must make up material they have missed during the class, even for excused absences. Instructors are only obliged to give consultation hours to students with excused absences.

Registration

Since all classes are on a first-come, first-serve basis, people wishing to enroll in the respective courses should register as early as possible. ELI maintains rolling registration to be more accessible to the students. Students can register for courses before all seats are taken. Late registration is not encouraged.

To register for the ELI English for Academic Purposes Program, students should apply through the Admissions Office at AUBG and be conditionally accepted.

For the Community Oriented Programs, students should fill in an online application form. The email addresses of Administrative staff are listed below:

- Director: Nikolina Radeva – nradeva@aubg.edu
- Administrative Assistant: Mihail Ivanov – mbivanov@aubg.edu
- Assistant Director / EAP Coordinator: Stanislava Gurova – sgurova@aubg.edu
- General ELI email Account: eli@aubg.edu

The English Language Institute offers group classes. In this regard, ELI reserves the right to form groups in accordance with the availability of instructors and the capabilities of the premises.

Application Process Steps for Community Oriented Programs:

- Fill in an online application form.
- Receive a confirmation email with the bank details from the ELI team.
- Pay and send a copy of the bank transfer to eli@aubg.edu .

Payment and Refund Policy

Students should pay all fees before the stipulated payment deadline. ELI accepts bank transfers in BGN or EUR. For bank transfer details, please contact ELI at eli@aubg.edu .

In case an international student is denied a visa, 80% of the tuition fee can be refunded.

All payments should be made at the AUBG Main Building Business Office located at 1 Georgi Izmirliiev Square or via bank transfer.

Refunds may be arranged when a student must cancel registration before beginning or withdraw from a course for medical reasons. Before the course begins, students will be refunded 80% of the cost of the course.

Discounts are available for ELI programs. In all programs, members of the same family can receive a 15% discount for one member when registering for the same semester.

Further questions about registration should be directed to the ELI administrative staff at eli@aubg.edu .

Course Prices and Descriptions

English for Academic Purposes

The English for Academic Purposes program offered at ELI is open to all Bulgarian and international students who qualify. The recommended ages for this course are 18-25 years old. The courses are offered in the Fall (Sep-Dec) and Spring (Jan-May) semesters.

Bulgarian candidates applying through AUBG are eligible for up to a 20% discount.

There are special rules for international students. Since EAP is not a degree-earning program, candidates applying directly to ELI will not be granted visas by Bulgarian authorities. Candidates must obtain their visas through AUBG.

The current tuition fees are posted on the website (tuition fees are subject to change).

Adult Community Oriented Program

The Adult Community Oriented Program at ELI is geared toward students 14 years and over who wish to increase their English language skills. During the academic year (September-May), this program serves Blagoevgrad and the surrounding regions. Classes meet twice a week. The classes are taught by a team of two instructors. Upon availability, one of the instructors is a (semi-) native speaker. Online classes are also available for students outside of the Blagoevgrad region if there are enough candidates (min. 10) to form a full group of the same level.

During the summer semester (July), this program provides classes to both Bulgarian and international students. Classes meet every day for four weeks.

Children's Community Oriented Program

The current tuition fees are posted on the website (tuition fees are subject to change).

The Children's Community Oriented Program is for students aged 7-13 who want to learn English.

During the academic year (September-May), this program serves Blagoevgrad and the surrounding region. The courses span a full academic year and are paid in two installments, one before the beginning of each semester (fall and spring). Registration takes place before the start of each semester. Students may be permitted to enter the course mid-year, before the start of the spring semester, if they demonstrate the appropriate level of English proficiency.

During the summer semester (June), this program provides classes to both Bulgarian and international students. Classes meet every day for two or three weeks. Students from outside areas will be tested to ensure they are placed in the appropriate level. Summer courses are designed to reinforce material learned during the academic year, focusing on interactive activities to enhance participation and application of language skills.

- All courses and course fees are subject to change. Bulgarian nationals are eligible for discounted prices.

Scholarships

Upon availability of funds, ELI offers a scholarship for a financially challenged applicant with good academic achievements in the Younger Learners Program. This scholarship is known as Rays of Hope for Bulgaria.

Student Identification Cards

All EAP students at ELI are issued personal AUBG identification cards at the beginning of the semester. These cards must be used to access all facilities.

Community Oriented Program students are issued general ID cards by ELI. These cards must be used to access classrooms for evening programs. Upon completion of the course, students must return these cards to ELI administrative staff. If a student fails to return the card, the certificate of completion will be withheld. Lost cards must be replaced for a fee of BGN 20.

International students must obtain a Bulgarian ID card while studying at ELI. For assistance, they should contact the International Student Coordinator. Fees vary by country, and students must inquire directly with the Migration Office or the International Student Coordinator. International students who will not be returning should return their Bulgarian ID cards to the International Student Coordinator upon semester completion. Failure to return the card may cause future issues when visiting Bulgaria.

University Activities

Academic Program students, conditionally accepted to AUBG, can participate fully in student life and events, provided these do not interfere with their intensive English classes.

Class Materials

Students are responsible for obtaining all required materials for their classes (e.g., textbooks, workbooks). These materials are not included in the tuition fee. All reference materials (e.g., grammar books, dictionaries) can be used in the library or bought individually. Though helpful for language acquisition, they are not a requirement of ELI.

Use of English at ELI

English is the official language at ELI. Students are expected to converse in English while in the classroom and on all ELI premises. They are also encouraged to use English as much as possible outside of class to enhance their coursework and general understanding and usage of English.

Questions

All questions about these policies and procedures should be directed to ELI administrative staff.

Hiring Procedures/Payment: Instructors

ELI hires both Bulgarian and foreign nationals for English language instruction. Bulgarian candidates should have a university degree in English, preferably a Master's degree. Foreign nationals should possess or pursue a degree in the Humanities or demonstrate sufficient English proficiency. Preference is given to ESL-certified candidates.

Bulgarian Instructors

ELI provides equal opportunities to instructors. The hiring process for Bulgarian instructors starts with an advertisement in local, national, and social media, as well as on the website. Candidates

must submit their applications to the AUBG Human Resource Department. The ELI Director and Human Resource Manager shortlist candidates, and only those shortlisted are contacted for an interview. Candidates must demonstrate fluency in speaking and writing English and prepare a general lesson plan on a given topic during the interview. Sometimes, successful candidates are offered the opportunity to teach a lesson, followed by a discussion on specific ELT methods used and objectives achieved. Upon successful completion of the interview process, references are checked, and the position is offered to the best-suited candidate. Bulgarian instructors are hired per the Bulgarian Labor Code on either a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time positions are created when there is a stable program that funds the position. Part-time instructors are hired based on registration and the number of hours available each semester. Preference is given to part-time instructors who have demonstrated professional excellence when a full-time position becomes available.

Full-time instructors are considered permanent employees and are hired with a labor contract. They are paid monthly in Bulgarian leva (BGN) and receive social insurance. Part-time instructors are hired on civil contracts, which must be signed monthly, and are paid monthly in BGN based on the number of hours worked.

Foreign Nationals

The hiring of foreign nationals differs significantly from the hiring of Bulgarian instructors. Foreign nationals apply to ELI or are referred by a mutual acquaintance and must undergo an interview. Certified ESL candidates and holders of degrees in the Humanities are given preference over non-certified candidates. The contracts and procedures for hiring foreign nationals vary based on their status:

- A foreign national with EU citizenship
- A foreign national with permanent Bulgarian residence status
- A foreign national who is a dependent of a Bulgarian citizen
- A foreign national dependent on a person with permanent Bulgarian residence status
- An AUBG exchange student
- An AUBG student

Foreign nationals are hired on a short-term contractual basis. They are responsible for their living visas; however, they may contact the Human Resource Department and the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) for assistance with their work visas.

Work Schedules: Instructors

Work schedules at the ELI vary based on the instructors' employment status.

Full-time Bulgarian instructors are expected to teach 21 academic hours per week in the classroom. Additionally, they spend extra time on homework/test correction, lesson planning, as well as other duties related to the job. Part-time Bulgarian instructors and native speakers are expected to teach anywhere from 3-30 academic hours per week in the classroom and allow extra time for class preparation and homework/test correction.

Evaluation: Instructors

All instructors are periodically evaluated for their performance at ELI. Full-time Bulgarian instructors can expect to have a formal annual performance review as well as any interim reviews deemed necessary by the Director. Part-time Bulgarian instructors and foreign nationals can be reviewed through a combination of in-class observations by the Director of ELI and/ or student/peer evaluations.

Substitution: Instructors

In cases of emergency or illness, instructor substitution may be required. For all programs, the best match for any substitute will be a teacher who is currently teaching the same level. If such an instructor is not available, the priorities are as follows: 1) other full-time instructors, and 2) outside instructors (e.g., instructors from other institutions). If a substitute instructor cannot be found in time, the class will be cancelled for the day, but the program will be extended to meet the required academic hours. This method is used in extreme cases only. If there is insufficient time to replace an absent instructor, students will be contacted via email and informed that classes have been cancelled. The missed time will be made up during or at the end of the course, based on availability and majority consent of the instructor and students.

Materials: Instructors

All instructors are provided with necessary basic resource materials to teach their classes and have additional reference materials at their disposal. These materials include, but are not limited to: teacher's books, student's books, workbooks, grammar references, dictionaries, multimedia projectors, computers, online resources, and a photocopying machine. After completing all required textbook material, instructors may use appropriate supplemental materials as long as the emphasis is on English language acquisition or practice. This can include games, videos, or other multimedia tools. These supplemental materials should not replace the required curriculum.

Textbooks are distributed at the beginning of each semester and must be signed out with the administrative assistant of ELI and returned upon the completion of each course. There is a limited amount of resource material available, so prompt return of all materials is necessary.

Instructors are provided with ID cards that allow access to the ELI after 5 pm. To get the card, the instructor must go to the AUBG main building to have a picture taken and the card made and activated. This card should be kept with the instructor while at ELI and prominently displayed while at work.

Facilities: Instructors

ELI is situated in the AUBG Main Building, occupying an entire floor that features 12 classrooms, a teaching staff office, administrative offices, and offices for full-time instructors.

Instructors are encouraged to do their class preparatory work in their offices (full-time instructors) or in the teaching staff office (part-time instructors). In the teaching staff office, Director's Office, and Administrative Office, additional reference resources on grammar and learning activities are available for instructor use.

A copy machine is available for copying class materials. The copier is not for personal use and should only be used for class preparation. Photocopying should be minimized to save resources.

Telephones are available to the instructors at ELI. The phones may be used by the instructors for conducting ELI business or for personal use to local numbers only. Out-of-area calls or calls to cell phones should be cleared with the administration before placement and should not be for personal use. Any emergency use of the phones will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the Director of the ELI.

Deadlines: Instructors

There are several deadlines that must be met by instructors. These include, but are not limited to, syllabi, tests, and certificates. The syllabi and tests must be prepared by the instructors and provided to the students in a timely manner. After grading the tests at the end of each semester, certificates are prepared based on the results.

Syllabi

Syllabi should be provided to the students at the beginning of the semester with a copy sent to the ELI Director. A syllabus should contain: instructor information (name, contact information, office hours, etc.), course objectives, the applicable term (e.g., Spring, Summer, Fall), evaluation policies, textbooks/materials that will be covered, and a general timeline for the course (including national holidays). The instructor should strictly adhere to these policies in the classroom to maintain a fair learning environment for the students.

Tests

The scores from the tests are combined with other graded activities during the semester to determine the student's final grade.

Deadlines associated with the final exams and grades are of the utmost importance. A copy of the instructor's final exam must be provided to the Administrative Assistant of ELI at least two days prior to the final exam dates to allow enough time to prepare the necessary copies for each instructor. This is especially important during the summer programs as all instructors give their tests on the same day.

Certificates

Certificates are directly related to the results of all coursework. They are prepared by the Administrative Assistant of the ELI; however, instructors are responsible for getting the combined scores to the Administrative Assistant as soon as possible (usually one day after the final test has been proctored), so there is sufficient time to print, seal, and have all appropriate parties sign the certificates before they are handed to the students. During the summer programs, results should be submitted on the same day as the certificates are handed to students the day following the exams.

Course Instruction

Courses at ELI differ in intensity and diversity based on the students' needs.

The basic difference between the Academic and Community-Oriented Courses is the variation in intensity, scope of material, and target group.

The Academic Program focuses on preparing academic students to enter the University with a sufficient level of English language fluency. The Community-Oriented Courses are designed for a wide variety of English language learners. These students come from diverse backgrounds and are motivated to learn by various interests (e.g., personal interest, academic proficiency, or professional development).

In courses that are team-taught, each instructor must collaborate to ensure all material is covered.

Each program consists of a different number of contact hours. Courses conclude when the required contact hours have been completed. This means that if the course must be extended to meet the total number of hours, it might be (in extreme cases only).

Instructors are responsible for creating a learner-centered environment in the classroom. This includes being prepared, allowing students sufficient participation time, and maintaining an orderly atmosphere by strictly adhering to discipline policies. In the classroom, there can be many distractions. Instructors should minimize these distractions, which can include, but are not limited to, cell phones, talking at inappropriate times, use of native languages, and cheating.

At the beginning of each class, students should be asked to turn off their cell phones. If the phone is an absolute necessity for work or emergency purposes, it should be set to silent/vibrate and the student should sit near the door to minimize disruption.

Students are encouraged to take an active role in speaking during most classes as this is integral to language acquisition. However, there are appropriate times for speaking, which will be guided by the instructor in speaking exercises. Questions are welcome, but students should wait until the instructor has finished explaining before interrupting. Speaking in native languages during class should not be tolerated.

Cheating is a serious offense and should be dealt with accordingly. Students should be reminded about the seriousness of their actions regarding cheating, and it should never go unpunished. Policies for cheating should be outlined in the course syllabus and thoroughly discussed on the first day of class.

Instructors are responsible for creating a cheat-free environment as much as possible.

In all cases not mentioned in this document, decisions should be sought in the AUBG Catalogue, AUBG Policies and Procedures Manual, or Bulgarian Labor Code.