NATO UNCLASSIFIED

OFFICE NOTICE

16 June 2011   ON(2011)0026

REVIEW OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY
FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF OF NATO

Note by the Assistant Secretary General for Executive Management

1.   Following the approval by the Secretary General of the revised language policy, I attach an implementing directive for the International Staff of NATO.

2.   As further detailed in the ANNEX, the revised policy foresees inter-alia that the levels required in the two NATO official languages are tailored to the requirements of the post and stated in the vacancy notice and post description. In addition, a minimum requirement for the second language for any post in the IS is set at "beginner" level, except in cases where the post requires a higher level.

3.   The implementing directive applies to all staff appointed to posts advertised as of the date of issuance.

4.   Copies of the language policy and the attached implementing directive are available on the HR Website of the Intranet, address:
http://hqweb.hq.nato.int/em/HR/en/recruitment/languagePolicy/index.htm .

5.   The implementing directive will also be available on the NATO Internet website for the attention of prospective candidates for employment.

6.   For further enquiries regarding the application of the directive please contact HR Talent Management and Organizational Development, Ext. 3750 or the Recruitment Service, Ext. 4135.

(signed) William A. EATON

1 Annex

Distribution: Original: English
IS staff members

DMS 1855214

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IMPLEMENTING DIRECTIVE ON THE LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF

(Date of issuance: 16 June 2011)

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Secretary General approved a revised language policy for the International Staff (IS).

1.2   This directive explains the procedures to be followed in applying the language policy. It applies to all candidates for employment or serving staff of the IS who are appointed to posts in categories A, L, B or C advertised as of the date of issuance. It does not apply to consultants or temporary personnel.

II.   LANGUAGE LEVELS AND REQUIREMENTS

2.1   The two official languages of NATO are English and French. The levels required in the two languages depend on the requirements for the post and are stated in the vacancy notice and post description. They are determined by managers in coordination with Human Resources (HR), and taking into account NATO IS language levels as described in the Attachment. The levels stated in the vacancy notice and job description are considered essential qualifications. Knowledge of other languages may also be included as a desirable qualification.

2.2   The minimum requirement for all posts is a working level in the first (primary) official language. A working level is defined as the minimum level that staff members must possess in order to be able to carry out the duties of the post. It is an essential qualification which all candidates must meet in order to be selected and appointed to posts on the IS. Depending on the post, a working level of either "PROFICIENCY" or "ADVANCED" will be required (see NATO IS levels in Attachment).

2.3   The level required for the second official language will also depend on the requirements of the post. In some posts, e.g. translators, it may be the same as for the first official language.   For others knowledge of the second official language may be less important and the level required may therefore be lower. The minimum requirement for the second official language for any post in the IS is set at "BEGINNER" level, except in cases where the post requires a higher level.

2.4   The second language requirement is not a condition for selection or appointment but, as described below, staff members appointed to posts in the IS with a second language level below the one required for the post must make efforts to improve it. Success or otherwise in such efforts will have an impact on annual performance reviews and consequences for a number of personnel decisions as described in Section IV.

III.   ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE LEVELS

3.1   Candidates for vacant posts, including serving staff, will have their language level assessed by the Recruitment Service during the selection process using a computer-based language testing tool. The tool will test the oral and written level in the appropriate official language (English or French).

3.2   For candidates who are native English or French speakers the language concerned will be taken as their first (primary) official language. For non-native speakers the official language the first (primary) official language will, as a general rule, be taken to be the official language used by the candidate in completing the application form.

3.3   With the exception of those who already passed the NATO language test in the previous two years, all candidates invited for interview (including serving staff) will be required to pass the test in the second NATO official language. Thus native speakers of French will be tested in English, and vice-versa, while non-native speakers will be tested in their weaker official language. Candidates who have no knowledge at all of the second can request a test waiver; their score on the test will then be recorded as zero. In order to assess whether the candidate has passed the test in the second language comparison is made with the language requirements in the vacancy notice. The score obtained is recorded for any necessary follow-up as described below.

3.4   It will not normally be necessary to test the candidate in the primary language since this will be assessed anyway in the written test and interview. If nevertheless there is still some doubt about whether the candidate possesses the required level in the primary language, he or she may be required to pass the test in the language concerned.

3.5   Language test results are valid for a period of two years. Candidates (internal or external) who apply for another position after two years are required to take the test again in order to assess whether the level has improved or regressed. Candidates may voluntarily request to resit the test in order to demonstrate progress, but not less than six months after the previous test.

3.6   Candidates (internal or external) who are appointed to a post despite being unsuccessful in the test of the second language test, will be informed in the nomination letter, and subsequently in the firm offer letter, that they should improve their knowledge of the second language and that they will be required to resit the NATO standard language test during their probationary period.

3.7   Some vacancy notices may include knowledge of a non-official language as a desirable qualification. In such cases HR and the hiring division will decide whether to organise a test of the language concerned as part of the selection process.

3.8   For consultation and record-keeping purposes, results of language tests are kept in the candidate's file and then, if subsequently appointed, in the staff member's personal file.

IV.   FOLLOW-UP

4.1   There will be a system of follow-up for staff who have been appointed to a post without passing successfully the test of the second language. The requirement to improve the knowledge of the second language will be included as one of the tasks assigned to the staff member and assessed during the probationary period. Information about progress and efforts

made must be recorded by the manager in the form in which he or she recommends whether the probationary period has been successfully completed and the staff member's appointment should be confirmed.

4.2   Staff whose appointment has been confirmed, but who have failed to make enough progress to pass the test in the second language, will be required to take the test again before the end of their first year in post. The requirement to pass the test will be included by their manager as an objective under the Performance Review and Development (PRD) system. All efforts and progress made must continue to be recorded in the PRD until the test of the second language has been passed.

4.3   Failure to pass the test will have a negative effect on the rating given in the PRD Annual Review or reviews and consequently on recommendations concerning salary step increments, changes of grade or the extension or renewal of contract.

V.   TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

5.1   Assessment of language requirements is normally made when posts are to be advertised or when an overall review of the post description is required.

5.2   Serving staff who, at the date of publication of these guidelines, hold a grade lower than that of the post which they occupy because they have not met the requirements of the post for knowledge of the second language may request their manager to review the language requirements of the post. The review must be carried out in close coordination with HR. If it is decided that the requirements should be revised to a lower level the staff member may ask to sit the NATO test in the second language. If they pass the test at level required in the revised post description, promotion to the grade of the post will be effective as from the date of passing the test. In no circumstances will promotion be applied retroactively.

5.3   There is no change to the level required in the second language for the purposes of entitlement to the language allowance in accordance under Article 31 of the CPRs. This level is set at "UPPER-INTERMEDIATE" as defined in Attachment.

VI.   MISCELLANEOUS

6.1   This implementing directive is available on the HR Website on the Intranet at: http://hqweb.hq.nato.int/em/HR/en/recruitment/languagePolicy/index.htm .

6.2   For any matters concerning the application of this directive please contact HR Talent Management and Organizational Development, Ext. 3750, the Recruitment Service, Ext. 4135 or the HR Policy Unit, Ext. 4154.

NATO LANGUAGE LEVELS[1]

Language Level Definition	Level	
"I am fluent and precise in my speaking and understanding of the language." These users' proficiency in the language is illustrated by precision, appropriateness and fluency of expression. These candidates are capable of using the language for academic and advanced-level purposes.	**PROFICIENCY**	VI
"Although I speak and understand the language very well, I still have some problems with unfamiliar situations and vocabulary." Language users at this level are independent. They can express themselves fluently and spontaneously. They have a large vocabulary and can choose the appropriate expression to introduce their comments. They can produce clear, well-structured discourse without hesitation and which shows controlled use of structures.	**ADVANCED**	V
"I can communicate reasonably effectively but do not always understand what people say." A user has a degree of independence that allows him/her to construct arguments to defend his/her opinion, explain his/her viewpoint and negotiate. At this level, the candidate has a degree of fluency and spontaneity in regular interactions and is capable of correcting his/her own mistakes.	**UPPER-INTERMEDIATE**	IV
"I can speak and understand what people say in familiar situations but I have problems with complex grammar and vocabulary" At this level, a user can understand and maintain a discussion and give his/her opinion in well-known situations, at normal speed. Comprehends lectures on familiar topics with some difficulty.	**INTERMEDIATE**	III
"I can communicate simply when I am in familiar, everyday situations." This level recognises the linguistic competency of a basic user. The candidate can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring the most common polite phrases and exchanges of information.	**ELEMENTARY**	II
"I can talk a little and understand people if they speak slowly and clearly." This level recognises basic knowledge. At this stage, the learner can interact in a simple way: he/she can speak about him/herself and his/her immediate environment.	**BEGINNER**	I

Post description wording for language requirements:
- Required levels of NATO's official languages (English/French): V/VI ("Advanced"/"Proficiency") in one; __ ("____") in the other.

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[1] The purpose of the reference table is to help hiring managers correctly identify the language requirements for a post. For example, a hiring manager may only need the incumbent to: "be able to communicate simply when in familiar, everyday situations, or communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring the most common polite phrases and exchanges of information". We look in the definitions and see that corresponds to "pre-intermediate". We would therefore require advanced or proficiency in one official language of the Organization and a pre-intermediate level of the other as a requirement in the post description/vacancy notice.

It should be noted that this is a tool to be more clear, transparent, modern, and consistent in our language requirements. Previously, a "good working knowledge" meant different things to various hiring managers, panel members or candidates. This way we are all (internally and externally) working from a shared definition for each level.