**Language Allowance**

1. The language allowance (LA) is a monetary incentive meant to encourage staff members in the learning and use of the various official languages of the United Nations. The LA recognizes, through a cash payment, the proven ability to function, orally and in writing, in more than one official UN language.

**Official UN Languages**

1. There are six official languages in the United Nations, namely:

* 1. Arabic
  2. Chinese
  3. English
  4. French
  5. Russian
  6. Spanish

1. All UNDP offices operate in one of these languages as the official UN working language of the duty station and, therefore, under the terms of their appointment, all staff members are required to be proficient in one official language.

**Eligibility**

1. All General Service (GS) staff members administered under the Fixed-Term Appointment of the UN Staff Regulations and Staff Rules are eligible for LA, provided that the qualifying conditions as set out in the paragraphs below have been met.

1. International Professional (IP) or National Professional Officers (NPOs) are **not** eligible for LA.

1. To qualify for the allowance, a General Service staff member must be proficient in two official UN languages and must pass a UN language proficiency examination (LPE) in at least one of them, subject to the following conditions:

* 1. Staff members whose mother tongue is an official UN language must pass the examination in another official UN language, which may be the language in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment; or

* 1. Staff members whose mother tongue is not an official UNlanguage must pass the examination in an official UN language other than that in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment.

1. Staff members may qualify for up to two LAs. To receive a second LA, a staff member must be proficient in three official UN languages and must pass the UN LPE in two of them, subject to the following conditions:

* 1. Staff members whose mother tongue is an official UN language must pass the examination in another two official UN languages, one of which may be the language in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment; or

* 1. Staff members whose mother tongue is not an official UNlanguage must pass the examination in two official UN languages other than that in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment.

1. The LA shall be paid to a staff member as of the first of the month following the month in which the staff member successfully passed the LPE. The UN Staff Development and

Learning Service will communicate the results of the LPE and establish the effective date.

**Administration**

9. The administration of LAs is completely decentralized to the respective bureau or office, which is responsible for raising the Personnel Action Form to record the staff member’s entitlement, processing payments, and maintenance of records.

**Amount Payable**

1. The amount of allowance payable at each duty station is specified in the local salary scale. The allowance is the equivalent of 5 percent of the annual total net remuneration of level GS-5 step 1 of the duty station at the time the allowance is first established. The amount is revised whenever there is a change in the GS salary scale.

1. The amount of the second LA is equivalent to half the amount of the first LA.

**Salary Treatment**

12. The LA is pensionable and is not subject to staff assessment. It is paid together with the salary in the local currency of the duty station.

**Language Allowance Determination**

13. The LA is taken into account in determining the following, where applicable:

1. Pensionable remuneration, contributions to, and benefits payable by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), e.g., retirement benefit, surviving dependent(s) benefits
2. Compensation for service-incurred illness, injury, or death
3. Special post allowance (SPA)
4. Overtime compensation
5. Insurance premiums
6. Separation payments, e.g., commutation of annual leave, death benefit, termination indemnity, etc.
7. Grade and step on promotion from the GS to the NPO or IP category

**UN Language Proficiency Examinations (LPE)**

1. UN LPEs are given to confirm the written and spoken knowledge of the official languages of the UN and consequent eligibility for language-related incentives.

1. The UN LPE can be taken:

* 1. Upon completing the language course: All individuals who were admitted to participate in a UN language course are eligible to take the LPE after they have completed the highest level of that course. This is the only situation in which the LPE is open to those who are not staff members of the organizations of the UN system.

* 1. Upon documenting equivalent knowledge: Staff members who have not attended or completed a UN language course but can document an equivalent knowledge of the language in which they wish to be tested are eligible to take the LPE. Such equivalent knowledge may be demonstrated, for example, by language study outside the UN for at least two years or use of the language on a regular basis for school or work; and/or

* 1. Upon contractual validity: Staff members who have regular, fixed-term appointments or contracts of limited duration are eligible to take the LPE, provided that their contract expiration date is after the date of the examination for which they are applying. Those whose contracts expire before this date must obtain authorization from their head of office, as provided for on the UN LPE application form.

**Administration of LPE**

1. In New York, the Language and Communications Programme of the UN Staff Development and Learning Service administers the UN LPE.

1. Outside New York**,** the LPE is normally supervised by a senior internationally recruited official designated by the Resident Representative (RR) to act as Examinations Administrator whose responsibility is to administer the examination to all candidates within the UN community in the duty station area.

**Registration**

1. Candidates must complete and submit the UN LPE Application form to the local Examinations Administrator, as follows:

* 1. If stationed in New York, to the Language and Communications Programme in the UN Staff Development and Learning Service

* 1. If stationed outside New York, to the Examinations Administrator through the local Human Resources/Operations Manager

1. Registration Deadline: The deadline for receipt of applications is scheduled by the UN Staff Development and Learning Service. Late applications are not accepted.

1. If the local Examinations Administrator is not certain that applications will arrive by the deadline, the completed application form for each candidate must be faxed to the UN Staff Development and Learning Service at 001-212-963-9514. Faxed lists of candidates’ names in lieu of application forms will not be accepted. Even if the applications are faxed, the original application forms must be submitted in order for candidates to be officially registered. No examinations are pouched until the applications themselves are received.

**Exam structure**

21. The UN LPE consists of the following, both parts of which participants must pass in order to progress to the next level:

1. A written part, which is administered to all candidates at the same time and consists of a composition and a series of multiple-choice questions testing listening comprehension, reading, vocabulary, and grammar. The session lasts three hours and ten minutes.

1. An oral part,which consists of a 15-minutes interview conducted individually with each candidate.

**Passing requirements**

1. A minimum score of 65 percent in each part of the exam shall be required for a passing grade. If a candidate receives a score of 80 percent or more on the written part but fails the oral part, the jury adjudicating the exam shall review the case and may allow a candidate to retain his or her written score for the following exam session. In this event, the candidate shall receive written notification of the jury’s decision and will be required to apply to retake only the oral exam at the following session.

1. Candidates who receive 80 percent or more on the oral part but fail the written part and candidates who have taken only one part of the exam at one session, shall retake both parts at a subsequent session.

**Exam schedule**

1. LPEs are held not less than once each year.

1. The written examination is scheduled by the UN Staff Development and Learning Service. No deviation from the dates contained therein is allowed.

1. The scheduling of the oral interviews is to be determined by the local Examinations Administrator, but it is suggested that they be held before the written examination date so that all examination material is returned for correction as soon as possible after the written test has been administered.

**Cost**

1. The examination is at no cost to the staff member. UNDP NY reimburses the UN for the cost of the examination.

1. If the staff member is based outside the location of the Examination Centre, travel costs are covered by UNDP and are charged against the same funding source used to cover the staff member’s post. Such travel is considered as official duty travel (DT) and, therefore, their absence is not charged to annual leave (AL).