



Thailand English Training



Australian Government

Department of Education, Skills and Employment



1. English Language Teaching and Training in Thailand

1.1. Overview

Thailand's economic vision – Thailand 4.0 – recognises the challenges in the current Thai education system, and so the Thai government is looking for assistance in quality assurance frameworks, regional delivery and assessment and English language training for their students and working age population under a lifetime learning umbrella.

English language fluency is relatively low in Thailand compared to neighbouring countries and this limits the ability of Thai students to compete internationally in an increasingly globalised world. According to the latest EF English Proficiency Index¹, in 2019 Thailand was ranked 74 out of 100 countries with the overall score of “very low” proficiency. Among other Southeast Asian countries, Thailand is ranked below Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia. While Myanmar and Cambodia ranked lower in comparison to Thailand.

The situation results in the high growth of international schools and bilingual programs in Thai schools as some parents seek to provide better education for their children. The International Schools Association of Thailand reported a growth rate of four to six per cent annually and 12 per cent over the past eight years. Reportedly, there are over 180 international schools in Thailand with 46 per cent of enrolments being Thai students.

²<https://www.ef.edu/epi/>

1.2. Governance

1.2.1. English curriculum in schools

According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE), English language is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum. The English language curriculum is overseen by MoE.

The study of foreign languages is aimed at enabling learners to acquire a favourable attitude towards foreign languages, the ability to use foreign languages for communicating in various situations, desire to seek further knowledge, and an ability to earn a living and pursue further education at higher levels. Learners will gain knowledge and an understanding of stories and cultural diversity of the world community, and will be able to creatively convey Thai concepts and culture to the global society. The main content of the foreign language curriculum includes:

- **Language for communication:**

use of foreign languages for listening, speaking, reading and writing; exchanging data and information; expressing feelings and opinions; interpreting and presenting data, concepts and views on various matters; and the ability to develop interpersonal relationships

- **Language and culture:**

use of foreign languages harmonious with culture of native speakers; relationships, similarities and differences between languages and cultures of native speakers; languages and cultures of native speakers and Thai culture; and appropriate application

- **Language and relationship with other learning areas:**

use of foreign languages to link knowledge with other learning areas, forming the basis for further development, seeking knowledge and broadening learners' world views

- **Language and relationship with community and the world:**

use of foreign languages in various situations, both in the classroom, the outside community and the global society, forming a basic tool for further education, livelihood and exchange of learning within a global society.





1.2.2. English training centres

An international institution wishing to operate in Thailand is treated as a private institution. Legislative requirements for the establishment of private higher education institutions are contained in the Private University Act, BE 2546 (2003) (the Act). The Act sets out a number of requirements for the approval and management of a private university, institute or college, and should be studied in detail. There are some differences in the requirements for each type of institution, which are detailed in Ministerial regulations. Sections of the Act specify:

- Details of requirements when applying for a licence and establishing an institution;
- Powers and responsibilities of the Commission on Higher Education relating to private higher education institutions;
- Administrative systems and governance requirements for the institution including the membership and powers of the university council and the rector;
- Regulations for the granting of academic awards;
- Financial, accounting and auditing requirements;
- Authority for government subsidies and supports, and employment conditions for staff;
- Authority for supervision and oversight by the Commission on Higher Education, procedures and penalties if an institution fails to comply with requirements, and provisions for dissolution of the institution or transfer of its licence.



2. Policy and Trend Updates

2.1. Overview

The Thailand 4.0 model is designed to promote and support innovation, creativity, research and development, higher technologies and green technologies. To prepare for Thailand 4.0, the government aims to transform the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) into a technology manufacturing and services hub by 2021. The Thai Government has also focused on promoting 10 targeted industries, ranging from smart electronics to aerospace and aviation. For this policy to be effective, Thailand requires a great number of skilled workers. However, the shortage of skilled labour is very noticeable in many targeted industries. Consequently, a tremendous task lies ahead for the education sector and it is crucial to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Thai education system.

2.2. Ministry of Education

The MoE is responsible for encouraging and supporting educational institutions so that they will be able to nurture their learners with the necessary skills in line with the demand of the 21st century and the needs of new targeted industries. At this stage, MoE deems that it is vital to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the areas of foreign languages and vocational education. Unfortunately, the number and qualifications of Thais and foreigners currently teaching in Thai educational institutions is insufficient if Thailand were to increase the quality of instruction in those fields.

2.2.1. Opportunities

Recent project: Collaboration to recruit and dispatch qualified foreign teachers to Thailand

Recently, MoE conducted a survey regarding the demand for qualified foreign teachers in Thai educational institutions. It was found that, in addition to foreign teachers who are currently teaching in the surveyed group, these educational institutions still need approximately 50,000 qualified foreign teachers to teach foreign languages and vocational subjects in over 30 selected areas.



In February 2020, HE Mr Nataphol Teepsuwan, the Thai Minister of Education, called a meeting with representatives from foreign partners including embassies and language institutions for consultation and future support. MoE has conducted research across Thailand and found a great demand for foreign teachers, especially for English language in Thai schools and vocational colleges. To expand the Thai economy and attract foreign investors, Thailand needs to urgently improve their ability to communicate in English. Therefore, the Minister is in the process of planning to recruit more 'qualified' foreign teachers to teach in Thailand with support from foreign partners. However, teacher shortage is a common problem around the globe.

Previous project: Government initiative in supporting English Language Training

The MoE promised to boost the English proficiency of Thai teachers and students nationwide by introducing bilingual curriculum (in Thai and English) at approximately 2,000 district schools starting in the 2020 academic year. The aim of the initiative is to develop children's language skills so the country can be more competitive in international fields. English training programs will also be provided for teachers.

There are three different English programs under the umbrella of the initiative. The details of each English program are:

- 1. International Program (IP):** using international curriculum and foreign teachers
- 2. Intensive English Program (IEP):** organising intensive English classes five times a week. The goal is for Thai students to be able to communicate proficiently in English
- 3. General English Program:** teaching four English language skills for all Thai students at a young age. MoE plans to recruit English teachers who participated in the English Boot Camp project to teach students across the country without charging additional money.

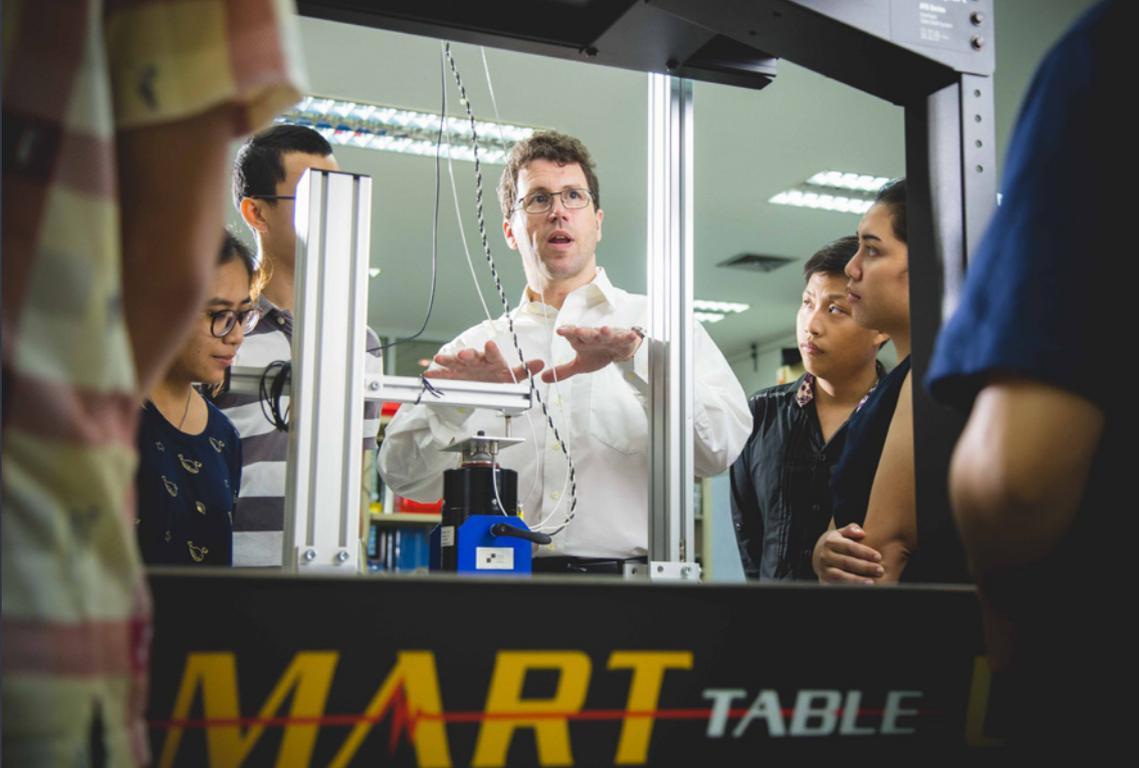
Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) has been focussing on internationalisation of higher education institutions. English language is one of the aspects that will allow the Ministry to achieve its goal. Apart from the governmental need, there is also great demand among Thai and international students to study international programs. In 2019, there were 688 international programs taught in English available for students. Thailand has become a host to more than 22,000 international students from 159 countries. China is the largest source country for sending students to study in Thailand (47 per cent), followed by Myanmar (12 per cent) and Cambodia (5 per cent).

2.2.2. Opportunities

According to the Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy in MHESI², "higher education institutions are encouraged to internationalise, for example, conducting lectures in foreign languages, undertaking exchange programs for academics, and strengthening research cooperation with an international focus." There is a demand from MHESI as well as the higher education institutions to expand agreements with international higher education institutions to increase the number of "collaborative study programs, expansion of joint research with foreign universities".



² <http://inter.mua.go.th/>



3. Australian providers in Thailand

The market for English training centres in Thailand is growing. A research centre for a Thai private bank estimates there is a 20 per cent growth in the number of language students and 22 per cent increase in market value. The research centre added that the students with further academic goals tend to choose large well-known language centres, while students who aim to improve their communication skills prefer small and medium-sized language centres. Australia is well placed to capitalise on these market opportunities including services offered within Thailand which could be accessed at more competitive prices by locals. Currently, there is only one major Australian English centre in Thailand, RMIT English Worldwide.

In addition, MHESI is currently focusing on offering non-award courses via Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) platforms to Thais in order to address the MHESI re-skill, up-skill and new skill policy. As the Minister of MHESI pointed out, MHESI is not only responsible for the education of university students, but also 38 million workers who need the right skills to meet the demands of industry. English courses are currently offered in almost all leading Thai MOOC platforms, such as THAI MOOC (supported by MHESI), CHULA MOOC (managed by Chulalongkorn University), MAHIDOL MOOC (managed by Mahidol University) and CMU MOOC (managed by Chiang Mai University). They are also offered through private online platforms such as Skillane. According to the MAHIDOL MOOC, the course that has the highest number of enrolments is an English language course in Listening and Speaking for Communication. As is evident, there is demand among Thais to learn English via online platforms, providing an opportunity for Australian institutions.



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