

[Received 11/10/06]

TO: Dr. Ernest Yanarella
FROM: Jeannine Blackwell, Dean
The Graduate School

The Graduate Council met on March 23 and approved the Policy Change in minimum requirements for language testing for International Teaching Assistants. [We request that following changes be made on a trial basis for 2 years, and if approved as reliable by the Dean of the Graduate School, the ITA Orientation Committee, and Graduate Council, the policy changes described below should be enacted in the Administrative Regulations.](#)

Language Test scores for ITA's pg. 3-7

Information on proposed changes in minimum requirements for language testing for International Teaching Assistants.

The Dean of the Graduate School asks for a revision and update of Administrative Regulation (AR II-1.0-9) which outlines policies on International Teaching Assistants. Among other changes, I ask that a change be made in the description of language screening interview. This should be expanded to include internationally recognized tests of English speaking ability. I request that the outdated requirements of specific tests and numerical scores be removed, and replaced with the delegation of the authority to choose specific tests to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will set minimum standards in consultation with language assessment experts.

I have done so because both of the internationally recognized tests of English as a second language, TOEFL and IELTS, now have oral interview components which are scored separately from the composite test. TOEFL is the ETS Princeton test, Test of English as a Foreign Language; IELTS is the International English Language Testing System, which is run by the University of Cambridge and the British Council. The Graduate School has assessed these instruments in consultation with the UK Center for English as a Second Language, and consulted other benchmark and aspiration universities to determine minimum scores for the speaking component.

We propose to set minimum acceptable speaking scores at:

TOEFL iBT : 26

IELTS: 7

We will use these scores to determine if international applicants may be offered TAships of types 1 & 2, depending on past educational achievement and SACS rules. Students who meet the overall minimum TOEFL or IELTS composite score but who do not meet the speaking score minimum may serve as TA types 3 or 4, which are defined as those assisting other teachers or graders.

The pertinent section of the Graduate School website currently reads so:

<http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/fellowship/tarainfo.html>

The duties of Teaching Assistants (TAs) may include full classroom responsibilities, instructional assistance in a laboratory or discussion session, or other related activities. TAs who have primary responsibility for teaching a course

for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such a course must have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and hold at least a master's degree, or must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training, and be regularly evaluated.

Teaching Assistants are employed by academic departments and are responsible to the Department Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, or other appropriate academic officer within the unit. Since funding for TAs is provided through the College in which they are employed, TAs are subject to policies in effect within their department and college. For example, teaching assignments, workload, and compensation may vary according to assigned responsibilities and policies within the employing college. All Teaching Assistants are carefully supervised and guided in their duties and responsibilities. In departments which employ TAs, an experienced teacher or a specialist in teaching methods provides TAs with guidance and supervision in assigned instructional activities.

Teaching Assistants are selected on the basis of their past teaching experience or on their academic promise to be effective instructors in their field of training. All new teaching assistants are required to attend an orientation program at the outset of the academic year designed to inform them of their upcoming duties, rights, and responsibilities. Most departments also conduct an orientation and training program designed to guide TAs in their specific classroom or laboratory responsibilities. Teaching Assistants are represented in educational unit deliberations about courses for which they have any classroom teaching responsibilities.

Prior to beginning their duties, International TAs (ITAs) are required to attend and participate in an orientation program designed to train, screen, evaluate, and monitor their suitability for undertaking instructional responsibilities. This evaluation, conducted by a committee of faculty, staff, and students, is under the purview of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. ITA candidates are interviewed for the purpose of assessing communication skills and potential performance as a teacher. Interviews include a representative from the ITA's educational unit. Scores of 550 on the TOEFL and at least 250 on the Test of Spoken English, or an equivalent examination, are required. ITAs who receive unconditional approval may undertake appropriate duties as assigned in their department. ITAs who receive conditional approval or who are disapproved may be assigned other duties until they have successfully satisfied a program of remediation within a specified period of time. An ITA not approved for teaching may be re-examined by the Committee at a later date.

Proposed new text of last paragraph, with changes indicated:

*Prior to beginning their duties, International TAs (ITAs) are required to attend and participate in an orientation program designed to train, screen, evaluate, and monitor their suitability for undertaking instructional responsibilities. This evaluation, is under the purview of the Dean of **the Graduate School**. **ITAs may be appointed in active classroom and lab teaching roles if they meet a minimum score on the speaking component of either the Test of English as a Foreign***

Language (TOEFL iBT) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). These minimum scores are 26 for the TOEFL iBT and 7 for the IELTS. For student who have taken older ESL examinations within the last two years, scores of 550 on the TOEFL and at least 250 on the Test of Spoken English are required, and these students must be interviewed by a committee of faculty staff and students. ITAs who receive unconditional approval on the basis of speaking component scores may undertake appropriate duties as assigned in their department. ITAs who receive conditional approval or who are disapproved may be assigned other duties until they have successfully satisfied a program of remediation within a specified period of time. An ITA not approved for teaching may be re-examined by the Committee at a later date.

If the program, department or the ITA orientation team determines that there is a significant discrepancy in oral proficiency in English between on-campus performance and the official language test scores, either party may request on-site screening for the ITA. They may be reassigned to other duties on the basis of results of the on-site screening. An ITA not approved in this manner may be re-examined by the Committee at a later date.

Clean text, with proposed changes:

Prior to beginning their duties, International TAs (ITAs) are required to attend and participate in an orientation program designed to train, screen, evaluate, and monitor their suitability for undertaking instructional responsibilities. This evaluation, is under the purview of the Dean of the Graduate School. ITAs may be appointed in active classroom and lab teaching roles if they meet a minimum score on the speaking component of either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). These minimum scores are 26 for the TOEFL iBT and 7 for the IELTS. For student who have taken older ESL examinations within the last two years, scores of 550 on the TOEFL and at least 250 on the Test of Spoken English are required, and these students must be interviewed by a committee of faculty staff and students. ITAs who receive unconditional approval on the basis of speaking component scores may undertake appropriate duties as assigned in their department. ITAs who receive conditional approval or who are disapproved may be assigned other duties until they have successfully satisfied a program of remediation within a specified period of time. An ITA not approved for teaching may be re-examined by the Committee at a later date.

If the program, department or the ITA orientation team determines that there is a significant discrepancy in oral proficiency in English between on-campus performance and the official language test scores, either party may request on-site screening for the ITA. They may be reassigned to other duties on the basis of results of the on-site screening. An ITA not approved in this manner may be re-examined by the Committee at a later date.

Because these ITA requirements are codified in the Administrative Regulations, I ask Senate Council to accept the attached changes in AR II-1.0-9. These changes are necessitated by the restructuring of the University to the Provost model, by the transfer of TA training and orientation from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to the Dean of the Graduate School, and by changes in federal regulations under the Department of Homeland Security. Homeland Security's SEVIS system requires that the admissions officer attest to the English

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

IDENTIFICATION

AR II-1.0-9

PAGE

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ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS DATE EFFECTIVE

7/30/90

SUPERSEDES REGULATION DATED

1/30/87

POLICIES ON INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS*

It is vitally important that students at the University of Kentucky be exposed to many cultures and to many social systems. This educational diversity may be met only partially through formal courses; equally necessary is the opportunity to meet and associate with students and teachers with different backgrounds, different traditions, different standards of behavior, and different ways of speaking. In providing this richness of experience, it is essential that those with teaching responsibilities satisfy reasonable expectations of communication skills and possess appropriate understanding of the backgrounds of their students. Teaching assistants from other regions of the world are valuable components of this educational process. It is essential, however, to ensure that these teaching assistants be proficient in spoken English and that they be given adequate training and supervision. The following policies shall apply to University of Kentucky employment as a teaching assistant of any individual for whom English is not the native language. Such individuals are referred to in the following sections as international teaching assistants (ITAs).

A. The Chancellor for the Lexington Campus shall appoint a committee of faculty, staff, and students each year to organize and coordinate an orientation program for all teaching assistants prior to the beginning of the fall semester and to direct the training, screening, evaluation, and monitoring of ITAs. The student members of the committee shall not, however, have access to information in a teaching assistant's confidential file, such as scores on Test of Spoken English (TSE) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The orientation committee shall be chaired by a faculty or staff member appointed by the Chancellor to serve as an orientation director. The director shall report to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

B. The orientation committee shall develop criteria each year for the screening of ITA candidates. These criteria shall be applicable only after approval by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Chancellor for the Lexington Campus. The criteria for evaluation shall include interviews and test scores (as described below), the particular nature of the proposed teaching assignment, the level of the course and the students, and the extent to which oral communication is essential. Judgments of the candidate's competence in the subject matter shall be left to the educational unit.

C. Each new ITA candidate shall be interviewed by the orientation committee for the

purpose of assessing communication skills and potential performance as a teacher. The ITA's educational unit shall be invited to have a representative participate in the interview.

AR II-1.0-9 pg. 8-11

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7/30/90

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* Refer also to AR II-1.0-7: Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants.

D. ITA candidates shall be expected to have earned scores of at least 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examination. If a candidate scores less than 550 on the TOEFL examination and there is evidence beyond the TOEFL examination that a potential teaching assistant has greater proficiency in English than indicated by the candidate's score, the orientation committee may recommend to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies that an assistantship be permitted; the Dean shall review the evidence presented and provide a recommendation to the Chancellor, whose decision shall be final.

E. Prior to approval as a teacher, an ITA candidate must score at least 250 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or on an equivalent examination. The TSE (or equivalent) may be taken before or after the individual's arrival at the University of Kentucky. The orientation director shall ensure that this examination is administered.

F. After consultation with the ITA's educational unit, the orientation committee shall recommend to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies on the qualifications of each ITA to teach. A copy of the committee's recommendation on each ITA shall be sent to the appropriate educational unit and dean. The committee may recommend unconditional approval, conditional approval (such as suitability for certain teaching assignments but not for others, pairing with another teaching assistant in a laboratory course, etc.), or disapproval. Removal of the restrictions imposed by conditional approval shall require re-examination by the committee. The recommendations of the orientation committee shall be followed unless reversed by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies; the educational unit may appeal these recommendations through the dean of the college and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to the Chancellor.

G. ITAs not approved for teaching assignments shall be assigned duties not requiring classroom student contact. The educational units responsible for these ITAs shall be responsible for funding the nonteaching duties.

H. The orientation committee and orientation director shall recommend a program of remediation for ITAs not approved for teaching or for ITAs granted conditional approval. These ITAs shall be re-examined by the committee, which shall notify the educational unit and the dean of the college by February 10 of the ITAs approved or disapproved for teaching assignments in the following academic year. Upon recommendation of the educational unit, a student not approved for teaching in August may be re-examined by the committee in time to be assigned teaching duties in the spring semester.

I. Students not approved for initial or renewed teaching assignments for the following

year shall be informed by their educational units of such action by March 1. Students not approved for teaching assignments by March 1 shall lose their appointments and emuneration for teaching assistantships at the end of the initial academic year, and shall be so notified by the educational unit. Re-employment of such students in nonteaching roles shall be at the discretion of the academic program and shall be funded by that program. Exceptions may be considered by the orientation committee to permit continuation of conditional approval or assignment to duties not requiring classroom student contact.

J. ITAs shall arrive on campus in time to participate in activities which may be scheduled as early as August 16. The Test of Spoken English or equivalent examination shall be administered to students who were unable to take it before coming to the University of Kentucky.

K. The orientation committee shall organize a special orientation program for ITAs. This special program shall consist of at least twelve hours of orientation and shall be coordinated with the orientation programs provided for all teaching assistants (refer to Section I of AR II-1.0-7). ITAs must participate in both the special ITA orientation program and the University-wide and departmental programs provided for all teaching assistants.

L. The ITA orientation program shall include components of:

1. Cross-cultural understanding:

- (a) Core values, patterns, and processes of American culture;
- (b) Purposes and functions of American higher education; and
- (c) Characteristics of University of Kentucky students.

2. University policies, regulations, administrative procedures, and academic support units:

- (a) Teaching, grading, testing, and advising policies;
- (b) Rights of students;
- (c) TA responsibilities;
- (d) Academic Ombud's recommendations; and
- (e) Sources of instructional and personal help.

3. Communicating and interacting with students in the classroom:

- (a) Speaking style appropriate to classroom;
- (b) Interacting with students: use of humor, informality;
- (c) Listening and responding skills;
- (d) Nonverbal language: eye contact, gestures, physical movement; and
- (e) Speech characteristics (fluency, intonation, accent, and pronunciation).

M. Each educational unit using ITAs shall:

- 1. Conduct a follow-up program of supervision and training of ITAs which is integrated with the overseeing of all teaching assistants;
- 2. Provide for the development of teaching skills appropriate to the discipline;

3. Evaluate the performance of ITAs; and
4. Assign one or more faculty members to monitor and supervise ITAs.

N. The orientation committee shall review departmental ITA programs, monitor the development of ITAs and their professional performance in teaching, and work with and assist educational units as feasible and appropriate in improving teaching by ITAs. The director shall report through the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to the Chancellor each semester; this report shall include evaluations of each ITA, detailed descriptions of the orientation and training programs that have been held, and the results of systematic surveys of student opinion.

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IDENTIFICATION PAGE
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**ADMINISTRATIVE
REGULATIONS**

DATE
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POLICIES ON INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS*

It is vitally important that students at the University of Kentucky be exposed to many cultures and to many social systems. This educational diversity may be met only partially through formal courses; equally necessary is the opportunity to meet and associate with students and teachers with different backgrounds, different traditions, different standards of behavior, and different ways of speaking. In providing this richness of experience, it is essential that those with teaching responsibilities satisfy reasonable expectations of communication skills and possess appropriate understanding of the backgrounds of their students. Teaching assistants from other regions of the world are valuable components of this educational process. It is essential, however, to ensure that these teaching assistants be proficient in spoken English and that they be given adequate training and supervision.

The following policies shall apply to University of Kentucky employment as a teaching assistant of any individual for whom English is not the native language. Such individuals are referred to in the following sections as international teaching assistants (ITAs).

A. The **Provost** shall appoint a committee each year to organize and coordinate an orientation program for all teaching assistants prior to the beginning of the fall semester and to direct the training, evaluation, and monitoring of ITAs. The orientation committee shall be chaired by a faculty or staff member appointed by the **Provost** to serve as an orientation director. The director shall report to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

B. The orientation committee shall develop criteria each year for the screening of ITA candidates. These criteria shall be applicable only after approval by the Dean of **the Graduate School and the Provost**. The criteria for evaluation shall include test scores (as described below), **interviews where deemed necessary by the committee**, the particular nature of the proposed teaching assignment, the level of the course and the students, and the extent to which oral communication is essential. Judgments of the candidate's competence in the subject matter shall be left to the educational unit.

C. Each new ITA candidate shall **must attend the mandatory international teaching assistant**

orientation, and if deemed necessary by the committee, be interviewed for the purpose of assessing communication skills and potential performance as a teacher. The ITA's educational unit shall be invited to have a representative participate in the interview.

* Refer also to AR II-1.0-7: Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants.

D. The orientation committee, the Center for English as a Second Language, and the Dean of the Graduate School shall determine acceptable scores on internationally recognized tests of English language oral proficiency. ITA candidates shall be expected to have earned scores meeting this minimum to be assigned as Teaching Assistants who play active roles in the classroom or laboratory sections. The Dean of the Graduate School will acknowledge ITA acceptability at the time of admission, submission of the official scores, and the submission of the GSAS form.

E. ITAs not approved for teaching assignments shall be assigned duties not requiring classroom student contact. With the approval of the orientation committee, these may be as type 3 or 4 TAs. If students are assigned non-TA duties, the educational units responsible for these ITAs shall be responsible for funding the nonteaching duties.

H. The orientation committee and orientation director shall recommend a program of remediation for ITAs not approved for teaching or for ITAs granted conditional approval. These ITAs shall be re-examined by the committee, which shall notify the educational unit and the dean of the college by February 10 of the ITAs approved or disapproved for teaching assignments in the following academic year. Upon recommendation of the educational unit, a student not approved for teaching in August may be re-examined by the committee in time to be assigned teaching duties in the spring semester.

I. Students not approved for initial or renewed teaching assignments for the following year shall be informed by their educational units of such action by March. Students not approved for teaching assignments by March 1 shall lose their appointments and remuneration for teaching assistantships at the end of the initial academic year, and shall be so notified by the educational unit. Re-employment of such students in nonteaching roles shall be at the discretion of the academic program and shall be funded by that program. Exceptions may be considered by the orientation committee to permit continuation of conditional approval or assignment to duties not requiring classroom student contact.

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K. The orientation committee shall organize a special orientation program for ITAs. This special program shall consist of at least twelve hours of orientation and shall be coordinated with the orientation programs provided for all teaching assistants (refer to Section I of AR II-1.0-7). ITAs must participate in both the special ITA orientation program and the University-wide and departmental programs provided for all teaching assistants.

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- (a) Teaching, grading, testing, and advising policies;
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2. Provide for the development of teaching skills appropriate to the discipline;
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4. Assign one or more faculty members to monitor and supervise ITAs.

N. The orientation committee shall review departmental ITA programs, monitor the development of ITAs and their professional performance in teaching, and work with and assist educational units as feasible and appropriate in improving teaching by ITAs. The director shall report through the **Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost** each semester; this report shall include evaluations of each ITA, detailed descriptions of the orientation and training programs that have been held, and the results of systematic surveys of student opinion.

State statute:

164.297 English language proficiency assessment for instructors.

(1) Each state university shall institute English language proficiency assessment for all instructors, including teaching assistants, for whom English is not their primary language. The instructors shall be evaluated periodically to demonstrate their ability to deliver all lectures and oral presentations in an English speech pattern which the students understand.

(2) Subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to the teaching of foreign language courses.

(3) If an instructor receives an unsatisfactory evaluation, he shall have one (1) semester to demonstrate his ability. If an instructor receives a second unsatisfactory evaluation, his employment shall be terminated.

Effective: July 14, 1992

History: Created 1992 Ky. Acts ch. 407, sec. 1, effective July 14, 1992.

From: Blackwell, Jeannine
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2006 4:40 PM
To: Brothers, Sheila C
Subject: RE: requested changes in the Minimum ESL scores and ITA procedures
Hi Sheila:

Sorry for the confusion.
The TOEFL iBT has 4 sections with a total of 120 possible points.

For ITAS:
We are proposing a minimum score of 26 on the SPEAKING COMPONENT of the test only. This score will be used for ITA qualification to exempt language screening.

For ALL international applicants:
a COMPOSITE score of 79-80 on the 4 sections of TOEFL iBT will be required.

Please note that we are proposing 6.5 (not 7.0) as the minimum IELTS composite score.

Dr. Jeannine Blackwell, Dean
The Graduate School
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0033
859-257-1759
email: blackwell@uky.edu
website: www.gradschool.uky.edu

From: Brothers, Sheila C
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2006 3:22 PM
To: Blackwell, Jeannine
Subject: FW: requested changes in the Minimum ESL scores and ITA procedures

Good afternoon, Dean Blackwell. I tried calling Brian Jackson about this, but was told he would be out until Friday. I would like to put these two proposals on the Senate Council agenda for Monday, so I would prefer an answer sooner rather than later, if possible. ☺

In his email below (emphasized text), Brian says "that a score of 79-80 is considered equivalent..." In the proposal I received from you (attached, emphasized near the bottom of the first page), however, the proposed TOEFL iBT score is listed as 26.

I do not know enough about these types of scores to make anything even close to an educated guess. Kaveh also was unsure, but wondered if Brian's numbers were percentages, while yours was a true score.

Could you please clarify this for me? I'd appreciate it.

Best regards,

Sheila

Office of the Senate Council
Phone: (859) 257-5872
Fax: (859) 257-8375

From: Jackson, Brian A
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2006 8:18 AM
To: Tagavi, Kaveh; Brothers, Sheila C
Subject: FW: requested changes in the Minimum ESL scores and ITA procedures

Good morning:

Following up on Dean Blackwell's e-mail, please find below the data supporting our proposed language requirement changes.

Regards,

Brian J.

We are proposing that the minimum acceptable internet-based TOEFL (iBT) score should be 80. This was derived from score comparisons published by ETS. The comparisons between the computer-based TOEFL (CBT) and the iBT scores are based on a field test conducted in 2003-04 of 3,000 test-takers in 30 countries. The comparison between CBT and the paper-based TOEFL (PBT) scores are based on a 1998 concordance study. ***These studies have established that a score of 79-80 on the iBT is considered equivalent*** to our currently acceptable minimum scores of 213 (CBT) and 550 (PBT).

We are proposing that the minimum acceptable IELTS band score should be 6.5. This was based on a review of scores used at benchmark and equivalent institutions. For example;

University of Alabama - 6.5
University of Arkansas - 6.5
University of California, Los Angeles - 7.0
University of Georgia - 6.5
University of Maryland, College Park - 7.0
University of Michigan - 6.5
University of Minnesota - 6.5
University of North Carolina - 6.5
University of South Carolina - 6.5
University of Virginia - 7.0
University of Wisconsin - 7.0
Indiana University - 6.5
Ohio State University 7.0
Purdue University - 6.5

From: Blackwell, Jeannine
Sent: Friday, November 10, 2006 3:03 PM