

**University of Kentucky Senate Admissions and Academic Standards Committee**

From: Senate Admissions and Academic Standards Committee (Joe Sottile (Chair), Janice Almasi, Todd Cheever, Christopher Feddock, Carl Lee, Alan Nadel, Glenn Telling, Zachary Fuqua)

To: Sheila Brothers, Office of the Senate Council

Date: January 19, 2010

The following proposal has been reviewed by the University Senate Admissions and Academic Standards Committee and was unanimously approved.

**Changes to Requirements for Undergraduate Admission to the Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (four-year BSN program)**

Briefly, the request includes a change in the minimum high school GPA requirement from 2.50 to 2.75 for admission into pre-nursing; a change in the minimum university GPA from 2.50 to 2.75 for admission to the professional nursing program; the addition of a minimum TOEFL score of 90 (with minimum scores of 26 in speaking, 22 in listening, 20 in writing, and 20 in reading) for applicants whose first or primary language is not English; and an increase in the ACT composite score from 26 to 28 for guaranteed admission to professional level.

Attachment

**UK**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
KENTUCKY®



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Lexington, KY 40536-0232

859 323-5108  
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[www.mc.uky.edu/nursing](http://www.mc.uky.edu/nursing)

September 14, 2009

TO: Heidi Anderson, Chair HCCC

FROM: Jane Kirschling, Dean   
Patricia Burkhardt, Associate Dean 

RE: Program change requests

Attached please find requests to make changes to several specific areas of admission to the BSN program. The proposals were approved with one dissenting vote.

We will be happy to provide any clarification needed.

## SIGNATURE ROUTING LOG

**General Information:**

Proposal Type: Course  Program  Other

Proposal Name<sup>1</sup> (course prefix & number, pgm major & degree, etc.): Nursing - BSN

Proposal Contact Person Name: Patricia Burkhart Phone: 3-6253 Email: pvburk2@email.uky.edu

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Identify the groups or individuals reviewing the proposal; note the date of approval; offer a contact person for each entry; and obtain signature of person authorized to report approval.

**Internal College Approvals and Course Cross-listing Approvals:**

Reviewing Group	Date Approved	Contact Person (name/phone/email)	Signature
Undergraduate Faculty	9/4/9	Pat Burkhart / 3-6253 / pvburk2@email.uky.edu	<i>Patricia Burkhart</i>
		/ /	
		/ /	
		/ /	
		/ /	

**External-to-College Approvals:**

Council	Date Approved	Signature	Approval of Revision <sup>2</sup>
Undergraduate Council	11-3-09	<i>[Signature]</i>	
Graduate Council			
Health Care Colleges Council	10/15/09	<i>[Signature]</i>	
Senate Council Approval		University Senate Approval	

Comments:

<sup>1</sup> Proposal name used here must match name entered on corresponding course or program form.

<sup>2</sup> Councils use this space to indicate approval of revisions made subsequent to that council's approval, if deemed necessary by the revising council.

**UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
COLLEGE OF NURSING**

Recommended Admission Requirements by Undergraduate Admission and Progression Committee;  
Approved by Undergraduate Faculty 9/4/09; Health Care Colleges Council 10/15/09

<b>Current Requirement</b>	<b>Proposed Requirement</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
For pre-nursing, HS GPA 2.50 and automatic admission to UK	For pre-nursing, HS GPA 2.75 and automatic admission to UK.	Students with 2.5 HS GPA are typically not successful in the program. GPA of 2.75 is more consistent with minimum it would take to be competitive for admission to the nursing major at UK. Average cumulative GPA of class admitted 2009-2010 was 3.56. Previous year it was 3.42.
For admission to professional nursing program, a minimum cumulative and science GPA of 2.5 is required.	<u>For consideration for admission to professional nursing program, a minimum cumulative and science GPA of 2.75 is required.</u>	Average science GPA of class admitted 2009-2010 was 3.57. Raises many questions among applicants and parents as to why minimum is so low if competition is so much higher. Also know that science GPA is predictor of success on NCLEX-RN.
For admission to professional nursing program, no additional TOEFL score required beyond UK Admissions Office requirement.	<u>For consideration for admission to the professional nursing program, the internet-based TOEFL is required of all applicants to CON whose first or primary language is other than English. Minimum cumulative score of 90; and at least minimum individual scores of 26 in speaking, 22 in listening, 20 in writing and 20 in reading.</u> The requirement may be appealed by the student in extenuating circumstances (e.g., demonstrated proficiency in English language from many years of education in the U.S.A.)	Due to the clinical component of the nursing degree, proficiency in English is critical to patient safety as well as student success. The current requirement is not sufficient to enable us to admit students who can function well in English in the context of patient care. The proposed cumulative score and subscores have been carefully selected to reflect specific competencies that will allow the nursing students to deliver safe patient care. TOEFL scoring rubrics, benchmarks, and Dr. John Yopp have been consulted.
<u>Guaranteed admission to professional level is offered to incoming freshmen with 26 ACT composite (or corresponding SAT combined score) and 3.50 high school GPA.</u>  Guarantee is maintained if student earns 3.0 each semester and 2.75 in science at end of freshman year.	<u>Guaranteed admission to professional level is offered to incoming freshmen with 28 ACT composite (or corresponding SAT combined score) and 3.50 high school GPA.</u>  Once enrolled, student must maintain 3.25 each semester in their first year and 3.25 in science to retain "guaranteed" admission to professional level.	The University strategic plan recommendation is that "the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile of ACT composite score of first-year students will increase to 28 for Fall 2013 first-year class."  With averages exceeding 3.5 cumulative and science GPA, standard for guarantee needs to be closer to the averages.

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
COLLEGE OF NURSING

**Proposed English Proficiency Requirements for Undergraduate  
Student Admission to the Professional Nursing Program**

A certain level of English proficiency is necessary for academic success in nursing as well as for client safety. For this reason, to be eligible for admission to the University of Kentucky College of Nursing undergraduate program, students whose native language is other than English must demonstrate an established level of English language proficiency as indicated through the Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL. Specifically, the internet-based TOEFL, or IBT, must be taken and the following minimum exam scores obtained:

- o Minimum cumulative score of 90;
- o Minimum individual scores of: 26 in Speaking, 22 in Listening, 20 in Writing, 22 in Reading.

“Native language” is defined as an individual’s first acquired language and the language of educational instruction.

It is not the intent of the College to unduly burden those who are proficient in English. However, given that communication is essential to patient safety and optimal provision of care, the College has a responsibility to assure that undergraduate students are proficient in English. The requirement may be appealed under extenuating circumstances (e.g., demonstrated fluency in English language from many years of education in the U.S.A.).

**IBT Registration:**

- The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is offered by the Educational Testing Service and may be taken at various test centers throughout the world.
- Be sure to register for and take the internet-based TOEFL (IBT).
- You will need to enter a code for the University of Kentucky when you register for the TOEFL. The school code is 1234.

**IBT score reporting:**

- Applicants must take the test early enough to ensure that the results are reported to the University by required application deadlines.
- When submitting test scores, please submit only original scores. The code for the University of Kentucky is 1234. Only official IBT scores will be accepted; photocopies will not be accepted.
- IBT scores are valid for two years from the test date. Scores over two years old will not be considered on an application.

**Additional information:**

- Complete information on the IBT, including free test preparation materials and testing sites, is available online at <http://www.toefl.org>

**UK CON Undergraduate Faculty Approval:**

4/18/09 Approved by Undergraduate (UG) Admissions and Progressions Committee (USAPC)  
5/01/09 Approved by Undergraduate Faculty (recommendation from USAPC); 88% (n = 22 of 25) of full time UG faculty voted; 95% approved; Vote = 21 yes; 1 no; 0 abstentions.

### Rationale for TOEFL Recommendations

Undergraduate Student Admission and Progression Committee (USAPC) recommends the use of iBT TOEFL scores as one factor in determining acceptance of undergraduate students in the UK College of Nursing based on English proficiency. This decision has arisen from experience in the College of Nursing. Over the past two admission cycles, seven out of sixteen students with English as a Second Language have been unsuccessful, a retention rate of 56%. Four undergraduate students have taken the TOEFL. Two who were *successful* had scores comparable to 106-108 iBT (263 CBT; 623 PBT respectively). Two who were *unsuccessful* (experienced multiple failures or withdrew failing) had PBT scores of 567 (comparison: 86 – 87 iBT) and 513 (comparison: 65 iBT). Among the unsuccessful students were two with Master degrees and two with community college credit. The seven who were unsuccessful spent time and tuition dollars striving to become nurses, at great expense to themselves and their families. Likewise the faculty invested time and developed considerable concern over the inability to retain these students.

Nursing education involves learning content critical to the care of clients' life and health. Nurses care for hospitalized clients minute-by-minute, around the clock. It is the nurse who translates the client's world for the physician and other care providers and then helps the client translate the medical regimen so that it works in that client's life. The CON would like students to learn nursing when their English is proficient. For these reasons we propose the use of the iBT TOEFL as one determinant of admission for applicants whose native language is not English.

Below are supporting rationale both for the decision to use the iBT TOEFL (as opposed to the paper-based or computer-based TOEFL) as well as the underlying rationale for score standards.

**1. Internet-based Test (iBT) is recommended for the following reasons:**

- The computer-based test (CBT) has been discontinued, and the PBT "will continue to be offered on a limited basis."
- The iBT measures reading, listening, speaking, and writing in an integrated fashion (the paper-based test, PBT, measures listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension)
- Some of the test questions in the categories of Speaking and Writing require iBT test-takers to combine or integrate information from more than one source. (Test-takers may be asked to read a passage, listen to a short lecture, and then speak or write in response.)
  - The writing scoring rubric rates the test-taker's ability to select important information from the lecture and coherently and accurately present this information.
  - The integrated speaking rubric rates
    - Whether the response fills the demands of the task
    - Delivery (pronunciation, pace, intelligibility)
    - Language use (basic and complex grammatical structures, effective word choice)
    - Topic development (clear progression of ideas, relevant information conveyed)

While the iBT simulates the academic setting, not patient care, we believe the skills measured are basic to the nurse-client interaction.

**2. USAPC recommends the score requirements in the proposal because:**

- Educational Testing Service (ETS) encourages institutions to set separate section scores in addition to or instead of a total score.
- Research on the topic is scarce other than that conducted by ETS.
- The iBT was developed in 2005 and we believe that many institutions currently are in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of their TOEFL score requirements. This belief was supported by the wide variety of score requirements in the 18 programs we reviewed. (Please note that we gave special attention to the review of border state and coastal schools as they may have more experience with international students.) Here are the ranges (see Table 2 at the end for complete data):
  - Total Score            61-100 (N=18)
  - Reading                18-21 (N=6)
  - Listening                18-26 (N=7)
  - Speaking               18-26 (N=11)
  - Writing:                17-24 (N=9)

We have thoroughly reviewed the scoring rubrics and feedback for test-takers for each section of the test ([http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/TOEFL\\_Perf\\_Feedback.pdf](http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/TOEFL_Perf_Feedback.pdf)). The recommended scores reflect a level of mastery critical to assuring patient safety and the provision of quality patient care. (See Table 1 for TOEFL iBT score ranges and levels of mastery indicated in each range.)

- **Listening (Recommendation: 22)**

The recommended score indicates a high level of listening ability because, according to the developers of TOEFL, scores in this level indicate an ability to understand conversations in English that include abstract or complex ideas as well as the ability to make sense of unexpected information. Additionally, persons scoring at the "high" listening level are able to distinguish more important ideas from less important ones. In contrast, scoring at the "intermediate" level indicates difficulty making sense of contradictory information, using information in complex processes and understanding informational interconnectedness.

The distinction between these two levels has crucial implications both for students learning about patient care as well as demonstrating competent care, (both of which are essential to passing nursing courses). The potential for students to misunderstand verbal information provided by a patient or to fail to recognize the most important concepts during an interaction with a patient can mean the difference between life and death.

- **Speaking (Recommendation: 26)**

Likewise the distinction between a "fair" and "good" level of speaking is critical. The student speaking at a "fair" level can convey relevant information but some details may be missing or inadequate. Imagine the potential results if details are missing or inadequate when explaining an invasive procedure to a patient, passing on patient information to another health care provider, or helping patients learn how to take care of themselves at home.

- **Reading (Recommendation 22)**

Similarly, a reading score at the "high" level is recommended because the "intermediate" level indicates difficulty understanding high-level vocabulary and text. Imagine the potential for patient risk if a nursing student is unable to understand what they read in the pharmacology book about the drug they are about to administer.

- **Writing (Recommendation: 20)**

A score in the "fair" range is recommended because writing skills are developed in the undergraduate program for all students, not just those with English as a second language.

**Table 1. TOEFL iBT Score Scales**

Skill	Score Range	Level
Reading	0-30	Low (0-14)
		Intermediate (15-21)
		High (22-30)
Listening	0-30	Low (0-14)
		Intermediate (15-21)
		High (22-30)
Speaking	0-4 points converted to 0-30 score scale	Weak (0-9)
		Limited (10-17)
		Fair (18-25)
		Good (26-30)
Writing	0-5 points converted to 0-30 score scale	Limited (1-16)
		Fair (17-23)
		Good (24-30)
Total Score	0-120	

Information available at:

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.1488512ecfd5b8849a77b13bc3921509/?vgnnextoid=0f8c6e873ee77110VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD&vgnnextchannel=5d76a1e13bf36110VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD>

3. **USAPC recommends a requirement that iBT TOEFL be taken within 2 years of application** because, as stated by the official IBT TOEFL organization, "TOEFL iBT scores are valid for 2 years after the test date."

Information available at:

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.1488512ecfd5b8849a77b13bc3921509/?vgnnextoid=fdd8af5e44df4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD&vgnnextchannel=7929d898c84f4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD>

4. **Additionally, USAPC recommends that, after using the proposed requirements for two years, the College of Nursing reevaluate the appropriateness of the established score standards.** As stated by TOEFL, "It is anticipated that ... initial score requirements will be reviewed by the institutions after the first two years of testing."

Information available at:

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.1488512ecfd5b8849a77b13bc3921509/?vgnnextoid=031e4e63dcc85010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD&vgnnextchannel=7929d898c84f4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD>

5. **USAPC recommends an exemption for individuals who have attended all four years of high school in the U.S. and earned a U.S. high school diploma.** The purpose of this exemption is not to burden many students who may be proficient in English. The rationale is that completing high school in English would provide intensive immersion in English through a full week of classes. This experience would also provide many opportunities for conversational English as students fulfill their developmental tasks of adolescence. High school also provides (for most applicants) a fairly recent immersion in English, which is important since language skills can be lost if they are not practiced.



**Table 2. TOEFL (iBT) Scores: UK Admitted & Enrolled First-year and Transfer International Undergraduates 2007-2009 (SAP Admissions Data provided by Dr. Susan Carvalho)**

<b>Year of application</b>	<b># of students taking Internet-based TOEFL (iBT)</b>	<b>Score Ranges</b>	<b># of students</b>
<b>2007</b>	21	0-70	4
		71-89	9
		90+	7
<b>2008</b>	47	0-70	9
		71-89	24
		90+	14
<b>2009 (as of 5/09)</b>	48	0-70	14
		71-89	22
		90+	10

Note: 0-70 Below UK minimum (e.g., Community college transfer students)

**Table 3. TOEFL Requirements of Various Schools and Organizations**

Nursing Schools and Other Organizations	Total	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
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**NURSING SCHOOLS:**

<b>** UK CON Proposal</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20</b>
National Council of State Boards of Nursing for Foreign Educated Nurses	83				
Western KY University - Nursing	86	20	20	26	20
Bellarmine Accelerated Second Degree	83			26	
Emory (MSN International Admission)	100				
University of Texas Medical Branch (MSN)	550 P 80 I				
UCSF-Graduate Nursing	80				22
Mid-America Nazarene University - Nursing	80	20	20	20	20
Salem Community College –N.J. LPN and AD nursing	79			23	
McLennan CC Texas - Nursing	100				

**OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:**

Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates			26	26	17
International Medical Graduates - Ontario	93			24	22 Comm. Medicine
National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy – U.S.	89	18	21	26	24
Foreign Credentialing commission on Physical Therapy	89			26	
National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (U.S.)		21	18	26	24
SUNY - general requirements	480-550 P 157-213 C 54-80 I				
UCLA BS degree applicants	83				
Murray State – general requirements					
Undergrad:	72	18	18	18	18
Graduate:	80	20	20	20	20
Northern KY University – general requirements	61				