English Language Proficiency Requirements

All international graduate students whose native language is not English must fulfill an English Proficiency requirement, through either English Proficiency Verification or English Language Certification. This proficiency requirement should be met early in a student’s program, and it must be completed before scheduling either the final examination for the master’s degree or the preliminary examination for the doctoral degree.

English Proficiency Verification

English Proficiency Verification can be achieved by presenting:

An official TOEFL test score not more than two years old of at least 550 (paper based), 213(computer based), 80 (Internet based), or

- an official GRE Verbal score of at least 146 (400 on old scale), or
- an official GMAT Verbal score of at least 22, or
- an official IELTS score of 6.0, or

acquiring alternative verification from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies via departmental request. An international graduate student holding a master’s degree from an accredited U.S. institution qualifies for alternative verification.

Individual colleges may choose to establish minimum TOEFL standards that exceed the University minimum for English Proficiency Verification.

English proficiency verification is the minimum English language proficiency required to graduate. *This level of English proficiency does not suffice for students to hold graduate assistant teaching position or any other position considered a teaching position.*

Certification

The State of Texas and Texas A&M University require certification before a graduate student becomes eligible to serve as a graduate assistant teaching, or any other position considered a teaching position (e.g. instructor, lab instructor, or lecturer).

English Proficiency Certification can be achieved by:

- Scoring at least 80 on each of the four sections (Written, Composition, Reading, Listening, and Oral Communication Skills) of the English Language Proficiency Examination (ELPE).

- Obtaining grades of A or B in English Language Institute (ELI) courses at the 300-level or higher, or

- Acquiring alternative certification from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies via a departmental request. An international student who has received a baccalaureate degree following four years of study at an accredited U.S. institution or institutions qualifies for alternative certification. All other requests for alternative certification require strong department
Guidelines for requesting alternative certification

Departments initiate alternative certification requests. The student should provide the department with documentation to support alternative certification. If the department deems the documentation sufficient to merit alternative certification, the department will submit with an authorized departmental signature the Alternative Certification Form recommending and requesting alternative certification (with supporting documentation attached) to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies will determine on a case-by-case basis whether to grant alternative certification.

Examples of experiences and/or training that may justify alternative certification

• Completing a rigorous and comprehensive (includes the 4 areas of Written Composition, Reading, Listening, Oral Skills) English training program or courses at a university and/or institution other than Texas A&M University and providing associated transcripts.

• An international graduate student holding a master’s degree from an accredited U.S. institution qualifies for verification but not certification. This student must take the ELPE to become certified to teach. Departments submit the alternative verification form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies to request alternative verification.

• Certificates from English as a Second Language Intensive training programs as a basis for verification/certification will not be accepted. These certificates will not represent an alternative to the applicable TOEFC, TOFLI, GREV, GMATV, IELTS, or ELPE requirements. These certificates do not reveal the rigor of the training or the language proficiency of the student.

Non-degree Status International Students with post-baccalaureate non-degree status (G6 classification) must meet the graduate English Language Proficiency requirements unless he/she is included in one of the following categories:

• A post-baccalaureate non-degree status international student admitted to Texas A&M under an approved agreement or contract (MOU, LOU, MOA, etc.) which outlines specific terms for postponement of the English Language Proficiency requirements for the duration of the non-degree program. For this category, the student’s department must request, in writing, the postponement through the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. OGAPS will also need a copy of the agreement/contract.

• A reciprocal educational exchange program for students admitted to Texas A&M through the Study Abroad Programs Office. For this category, postponement of the English proficiency requirement for the duration of the reciprocal educational exchange program will be done by the Office of Admissions. Please contact Study Abroad Programs for additional information about this type of student.
**English Language Proficiency Examination Prior to registering for Texas A&M courses**

In his/her first semester, international graduate students must take the English Language Proficiency Examination (ELPE) if the

- TOEFL score is below the University requirement of 550 (paper-based)/213 (computer-based)/80 (Internet-based), or
- TOEFL scores are not official or scores are more than 2 years old, or
- GRE Verbal score is below minimum University requirement of 400 (old score)/146 (revised score) and GMAT verbal score is less than 22, or
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score is below the University requirement of 6.0.

The ELPE is offered at the beginning of each semester for new incoming international graduate students. Priority is given to students who have not met the English Proficiency Verification standard, or who are likely to serve as GATs in their first semester at Texas A&M. The ELPE is given throughout the semester for students currently enrolled, or for students who have postponed taking the examination or English Language Institute coursework. Students holding a Verified status may take the exam at the end of each semester if their departments want the students to hold a teaching assistantship.

**ELPE for New Incoming International Students:**

Incoming international students that do not have at least one of the minimum university required tests [GRE Verbal (146 revised score/400 old score), GMAT (22), TOEFL (550)/TOFLC (213)/TOEFI (80) or IELTS (6.0)] must take the English Language Proficiency Examination on arrival. Students are notified of this requirement when they are admitted. When students go through check-in with International Student Services (ISS), they are given instructions for completing the ELPE registration process.

Incoming international students who are “English Proficiency Verified” may take the ELPE with the other new students if the graduate student’s department requires the student to serve as a Graduate Assistant – Teaching (GAT) in the first semester at Texas A&M. If the student is not going to be a GAT the first semester, testing can occur later in the semester.

If a student enters TAMU with a baccalaureate degree following four years of study at TAMU, they will not need to take the ELPE unless the department requires it. If a student enters TAMU with a baccalaureate degree following four years of study at an accredited U.S. institution or institutions, the student is eligible for alternative certification. The department must submit the Alternative Certification Form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies requesting alternate certification.

**Testing during the Semester:**
The English Language Proficiency Examination is given throughout the semester for students who are English Proficiency Verified. Students who are not verified or who are enrolled in an English Language Institute course are not eligible for mid-term testing. Students may register for the test via the online registration link at TAMU Data and Research Services (http://dars.tamu.edu). Students may only test once a semester (three months between administrations) unless written permission is obtained from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.

**End of Semester ELPE:**

The English Language Proficiency Examination is given at the end of each semester for students that have postponed requirements for the semester, and students enrolled in ELI classes. Students currently enrolled in the university that are verified and want to become certified may also test if they have not tested during the semester.

Registration for the ELPE Registration is required for the ELPE. To register students should go to the TAMU Data and Research Services website and follow the links. Students should always access ELPE registration via the link on the DARS page, not by saving the link to a registration page. Students will be sent an email confirmation of their registration that includes the testing schedule. Once the students take the examination, the scores will be entered into COMPASS. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies will perform an audit after the 12th class day of fall/spring semesters to ensure that graduate students hired to teach have successfully met English Language Proficiency requirements. Departments will receive notification of non-compliant students. Departments should contact Dr. Kathy Clark with the English Language Institute directly in order to enroll students in ELI.

Retesting students may not take the ELPE within three months of their most recent attempt without permission from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. The departmental graduate advisor may request a retest for these students only if:

- The department needs the student to be a GAT;
- The student has passed at least two sections of the ELPE; and
- The two areas lacking must have a minimum score of 75 in each section. If the student meets the above three criteria, the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies will approve the request and fax it to Data and Research Services. Departments will be responsible for notifying students of their approval or denial for a retest. The student will receive the testing information by email.

Departments will need to submit the Request to Retake the English Language Proficiency Examination Form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies with the student(s) name and UIN(s) requesting the student(s) be allowed to re test. This request should arrive at OGAPS no later than NINE days prior to the date of the earliest requested examination.

**Deferral of ELPE Retesting:**
With a high level of justification, departments may request from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies a one-time, one-semester deferral of ELPE retesting to accommodate scheduling of graduate teaching assignments only if:

• The three criteria for requesting a retest have been met (see previous section)
• The department attests in writing to the adequate English proficiency of the student, as required by the particular teaching duties they are to be assigned, and
• The department assigns a faculty member to conduct periodic reviews, including observations of student teaching performance during the first month of the semester, with appropriate actions if they deem student performance as unacceptable emergency

**One-Semester Deferral:**

On rare occasions, a department may need to hire an international graduate student as a Graduate Assistant – Teaching (GAT) who has not met the English Proficiency Certification requirements. In such a case, a department may request a one-time, one-semester emergency deferral of:

a) one or more English Language Proficiency Examination (ELPE) sections, or a

b) re-test of one or more ELPE sections. The deferral request should come to the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies through the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC) Dean via a memo from the Department Head. The level of justification for approval of an emergency deferral is very high. Below find examples of justifiable conditions. For a case in which the student has not taken one of more of the ELPE sections, and the following conditions exist:

• The department had not anticipated hiring this student as a GAT for this semester; and
• The student meets the requirements for verification; and
• The student has not taken one or more of the ELPE sections; and
• The student will not have an opportunity to take the ELPE section(s) because it is not being offered again before the start of classes; and
• The department has no other options of graduate students with the expertise/knowledge needed to TA the course. If the emergency deferral is granted for this case, the student is required to enroll in the ELI oral course during the semester of the deferral. The department may impose a higher requirement. Also the department must assign a faculty member to conduct periodic reviews, including observations of student teaching performance during the first month of the semester, with appropriate actions if they deem the student’s performance as unacceptable. For a case in which the student cannot retest again before classes start, and the following conditions exist:

• The student has not made the required score on one or more of the ELPE sections, or did not make an acceptable grade in one or more of the approved ELI courses; and
• The student will not have another opportunity to retest for the ELPE section(s) because it is not being offered again before classes start, or s/he does not meet the 3 retest criteria to retest again before classes start; and

• The department has no other options of graduate students with the expertise/knowledge needed to TA the course. If the emergency deferral is granted for this case, and at least one of the student’s ELPE scores is below 75, the student is required to take a corresponding ELI course during the semester of the deferral. The department may impose a higher requirement. Also the department must assign a faculty member to conduct periodic reviews, including observations of student teaching performance during the first month of the semester, with appropriate actions if they deem the student’s performance as unacceptable.

The ECE department takes the English language proficiency seriously and will petition the Office of Graduate Studies only in very rare circumstances which warrant a waiver.

**English Language Courses – English Language Institute:**

English Language Institute (ELI) course placements for a graduate student are handled by the Departmental Graduate Advisor in consultation with personnel from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, English Language Institute and Data and Research Services. Certain Texas A&M Departments allow a graduate student who has not had his/her English Proficiency Verified through the methods listed under “Verified” above, and takes the ELPE, to postpone some or all remaining English Proficiency requirements for their first semester of enrollment only. He/she must begin to take ELI courses (in at least one of the areas not yet passed) no later than his/her second semester enrolled at Texas A&M. To request this one-time, single-semester postponement, the departmental graduate advisor must submit a written request to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Graduate students may take a combination of Texas A&M University and ELI courses up to a total of 15 hours in fall or spring semesters and up to a total of 12 hours for a 10-week summer semester. English Language courses do not count for university credit nor can they be used to satisfy registration requirements if a student holds an assistantship (GANT, GAT, GAR).