

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Deans; Members, Graduate Recruiting Advisory Board; Members, AADC; Chairs, Committees on Graduate Studies; Graduate Advisors; Graduate School Staff; Members, University Task Force on English Proficiency and Graduate Students

**FROM:** Philip Cohen  
Dean, Graduate School

**RE:** New UTA English Proficiency Policies for GTAs

**DATE:** 13 August 2002

On 9 January 2002, we notified you that Council of Deans had approved a proposal from the University Task Force on English Proficiency and Graduate Students for eliminating some of the problems that we have experienced in certifying new GTAs for English proficiency as required by Texas law. A recent change in the ETS administered TSE-A test format from print to computer in the US and Canada has led us to revise that January 9<sup>th</sup> memo slightly. This revision now allows students to retake the TSE-A until an acceptable score of 45 is achieved as long as official ETS reported results arrive in the Graduate School before the end of students' first semester of enrollment as a GTA. This revised proposal will become effective for graduate admissions for the Fall 02 semester and after.

Currently, prospective graduate students who have been offered GTAships must meet a higher standard of English proficiency than those students who have been only offered graduate admission. We use the ETS-administered TSE-A test and the UTA-administered SPEAK test for certifying this higher standard for GTA eligibility. Students must make a 45 or better on either of these two tests. The Graduate School and graduate programs repeatedly advise new graduate students who have been offered GTAships to take the TSE-A test either in the US or abroad before they come to campus. Because our international students often find it difficult to take the TSE-A test abroad, many of them come to UTA needing to take our SPEAK test, which the Office of Assessment Services administers for a student paid fee of \$125. For several reasons, we often had fewer test seats available than test-takers. Moreover, SPEAK test scores often became available after Developmental English courses had already started in the fall semester. Occasionally, not enough Developmental English sections were available to accommodate those who had failed the SPEAK test.

We hope to eliminate these problems by increasing in the fall the number of seats available for SPEAK test takers. The Office of Assessment Services will accomplish this by hiring and training enough additional SPEAK raters to double and also speed up our ability to grade tests. If some new GTAs are still unable to get a slot in a SPEAK test, the English Language Institute (ELI) has agreed to provide a supplementary interview option for a fee of \$125 to certify their English proficiency. This interview option is only for those GTAs who are unable to get a slot in a SPEAK test. ELI will also delay the start of its fall semester Developmental English courses until August and September SPEAK scores have been reported, ELI will also create more Developmental English sections should demand for them materialize.

New GTAs who have neither earned 45 or better on the TSE-A or SPEAK tests nor passed the ELI interview option must still take and pass the relevant Developmental English courses before the end of their first employed semester in order to retain their GTAships.

The revised process for certifying new UTA GTAs for English proficiency is as follows:

- a. The Graduate School and graduate programs strongly request potential students who want to be GTAs to take the TSE-A overseas or before they arrive at UTA.
- b. All advisors instruct students without a TSE-A score of 45 to sign up for the TSE-A or for the SPEAK test as soon as possible after they arrive. Because of the computer-based TSE-A format, students choosing to take the TSE-A may repeat the test until an acceptable score of 45 is achieved as long as official ETS reported results arrive in the Graduate School before the end of the students' first semester of enrollment. Students choosing SPEAK may not repeat the test, because the SPEAK format is not computer-based. Assessment Services' phone number is 817-272-2362. Online access is <http://www.uta.edu/assessment>
- c. If the SPEAK tests for August or September are full, Assessment Services will provide ELI with documentation in the form of an email, thus enabling a student to sign up for an interview.
- d. Students who do not pass SPEAK may not go for an interview with ELI. Students who do not pass SPEAK or the ELI Interview must take ELI Developmental English. ***Please see flow chart below.***
- e. ELI will forward interview scores to Assessment Services to be entered into the student record system. Screen SD07 (Test Scores) will reflect TSE-A, Speak or ELI Interview scores, and the completion date.
- f. ELI will delay the start of Developmental English so that students who take the August and September screenings and do not achieve 45 on the SPEAK test or pass the interview can take the course. Projected dates for sections 1 & 2 are 9/16-11/22. If needed, sections 3 & 4 will be 9/30-12/7. Please contact the ELI office (817-272-2730) to confirm class schedules.

We believe that these changes will make certifying new UTA GTAs for English proficiency in the Fall semesters a much less frustrating experience.

## English Proficiency Requirement for Graduate Teaching Assistants

