



MEMO

DATE: March 7, 2022
TO: Department Heads, Graduate Coordinators, and Deans
FROM: Jim Ahern, Vice Provost for Graduate Education
RE: REMINDER – English Oral Proficiency Requirement for All International Graduate Teaching Assistants

I am pleased to announce some significant improvements to U.W.’s English Oral Proficiency Requirement for international (non-native English speaking) Graduate Teaching Assistants. These changes will allow more flexibility for graduate students to demonstrate sufficient English oral proficiency, a requirement for being hired as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA).

Reminder. Please make sure that all of your international (non-native English speaking) graduate assistants who will be hired or rehired as GTAs have demonstrated sufficient English oral proficiency (see required tests and scores in Table 1). This requirement applies to all GTAs no matter the source of funding for the position.

New Exams Accepted for the English Oral Proficiency Requirement

Beginning immediately, students may demonstrate their English oral proficiency through TOEFL, IELTS, and Duolingo oral proficiency subscores in addition to the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPIc) Exam accepted previously. Required scores and subscores are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Exam Scores and Subscores Sufficient to Meet the English Oral Proficiency Requirement for International Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Exam	Subexam	Minimum Acceptable Score or Subscore
OPIc	N/A	Advanced Mid
TOEFL	Speaking	23
IELTS	Speaking	6.5
Duolingo	Conversation & Production (average of both)	105

Since international graduate students must submit TOEFL, IELTS or Duolingo exam results as part of the admissions process, an additional exam of oral proficiency will not be required if they meet the above, relevant threshold. Additionally, there is now just a single proficiency

threshold (Advanced Mid) for the OPIc. Beginning with the Fall 2022 semester, students with OPIc scores lower than Advanced Mid cannot be hired as Graduate Teaching Assistants, no matter the type of duties, unless they have demonstrated sufficient oral proficiency via one of the other exams' subscores (Table 1). Consequently, continuing graduate teaching assistants without a minimum acceptable OPIc score who also have a below minimum acceptable speaking subscore on file will have to demonstrate sufficient oral proficiency as given in Table 1 in order to be hired as GTAs for spring 2023 or beyond. These international teaching assistants can either take another OPIc exam (or TOEFL, IELTS, Duolingo), or contact Petra Heinz, Graduate ESL Coordinator and ACTFL Certified English OPI Tester, to schedule a free-of-charge in-house OPI (phein@uwyo.edu). A minimum acceptable score or subscore has to be on file by January 1, 2023.

Reminders Regarding the English Oral Proficiency Requirement for GTAs

Incoming students. If an incoming international graduate student will ever be employed as a GTA while at UW, the graduate program must communicate to the student that any employment as a graduate teaching assistant is contingent on the student submitting a sufficient oral proficiency score by August 1 (for fall), and January 1 (for spring). Furthermore, I *highly recommend* that programs that regularly employ international graduate students as GTAs make admission contingent on a passing oral proficiency score. The sooner these students demonstrate their oral proficiency the less likely last-minute funding changes will need to be made.

Continuing students. All current international graduate assistants who have not yet taken or did not meet the minimum required score(s) for oral proficiency will have to show proof of sufficient oral proficiency (see Table 1) in order to be rehired. In order to avoid any hiring delays, continuing students should complete an oral proficiency exam with a passing score by no later than one month before their start of employment as a GTA.

English Oral Proficiency Exemption Process

The Office of Graduate Education (OGE) can grant an exemption from the OPIc exam if a student has an advanced degree from an English-language university in combination with proof of teaching experience *or* completion of the University of Wyoming's International Teaching Assistant Training Certificate offered by the English Language Center. Exemption requests must be made by faculty or staff. Requests from students cannot be considered.

Exemptions for Students with Advanced Low OPIc scores (added August 12, 2022). Previously, students to be employed as GTAs who have *Advanced Low* OPIc scores could serve in lab and discussion section teaching roles without an exemption being granted. For AY22-23 programs will need to request an exemption for such roles. Please submit a request to GradEd@uwyo.edu that provides the student's name, W#, department where they are hired as GA, the course and section numbers for the lab/discussion section(s) that they will be assigned to, a short description of their duties in this role, and confirmation that they have an *Advanced Low* OPIc score but do not have sufficient TOEFL, IELTS, or Duolingo subscores to qualify for

normal teaching roles. Such requests may include multiple students in a single email, if applicable. Both new and continuing students with Advance Low scores may be considered for such exemptions. The English Language Center is available to help such students through assessing their proficiency and/or providing training.

Additional Information

Information regarding UW's OPIc requirement for Graduate Teaching Assistants and how to register to take the OPIc can be found at: <https://www.uwyo.edu/study-iep-esl/grad-ta-support/opi-registration.html>.

Please also see the English Language Center's website (<https://www.uwyo.edu/study-iep-esl/credit-esl-courses/index.html>) for additional information on English language support for international graduate assistants and the OPIc requirement.