UCDAVIS
TA/AI Language Proficiency Requirement

Requirements, Assessment, Resources, and Tools

UCDAVIS
International & Academic English
Office of Undergraduate Education

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Graduate Students Affected

The TA/AI language proficiency requirement described in this handbook applies to all UC Davis graduate students – regardless of a student's citizenship or visa status. While most students affected by this requirement will be international students, it is worth noting that some domestic students may need to take action to meet requirements while some international students will have already met the requirements.

English Language Requirements for Graduate Students

There are two different English language proficiency requirements for admitted graduate students who elect to be TAs: (1) the first year English course requirement and (2) the TA/AI language proficiency requirement. Both of these sets of requirements are in addition to the minimum admission requirements.
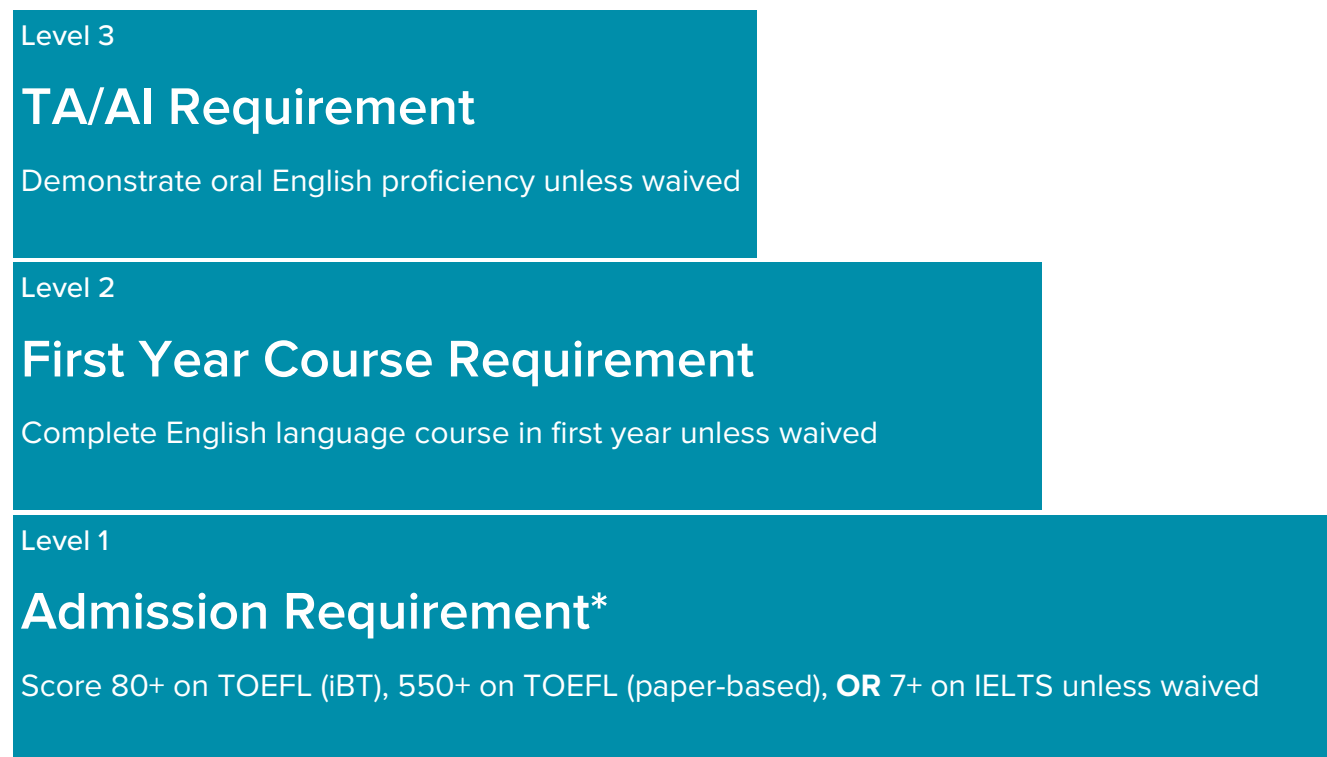
Level 3
TA/AI Requirement
Demonstrate oral English proficiency unless waived

Level 2
First Year Course Requirement
Complete English language course in first year unless waived

Level 1
Admission Requirement*
Score 80+ on TOEFL (iBT), 550+ on TOEFL (paper-based), **OR** 7+ on IELTS unless waived

Figure 1. Three levels of English language requirements for graduate students at UC Davis.
*Admission requirements vary by department.

Some students can satisfy all three levels of requirements before arriving to UC Davis. Others will need to continue working on their language proficiency after beginning their studies in order to meet the first year English course requirement and, if applicable, the TA/AI requirement.

First Year English Course Requirement
It has been a longstanding practice to require ESL coursework during the first academic year for graduate students who have not yet achieved a certain degree of English proficiency. This practice became policy in 2018.

All new graduate students should take an English language course (UWP 225, UWP 226, or equivalent) during their first academic year, unless:

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- The student has an undergraduate or graduate degree from an approved English-medium institution, as confirmed by the UC Davis Office of Graduate Studies; or
- The student has a TOEFL (iBT) score of 105 or higher or IELTS score of 7.5 or higher; or
- The student scored 24 or higher on the TOEFL (iBT) writing and 23 or higher on the TOEFL (iBT) speaking portion of the test.

First Year English Course Requirement Options

Students can meet the first year English course requirement by meeting one of the qualifications listed in the previous section or by taking UWP 225 (formerly LIN 25), UWP 226 (formerly LIN 26), or an equivalent course during their first academic year. You can advise your students on which course(s) would be most helpful to them.

- **UWP 225** is strongly recommended for students with TOEFL iBT scores below 95 or speaking subset scores below 22. It is a multi-skills course that helps graduate students improve their skills and knowledge in writing, speaking, listening, reading, and academic culture.
- **UWP 226** primarily focuses on the skills needed for effective academic writing and prepares students for writing conference proposals, abstracts, journal articles, dissertations, etc. UWP 226 is recommended to students who will be expected to produce written work for an academic audience.
- **Equivalent courses** include one course from the UWP 102 or 104 series or UWP 298.

TA/AI Language Proficiency Requirement

All graduate students, except those with an undergraduate degree from an institution where English is the sole language of instruction, must demonstrate oral English proficiency before they are appointed to TA or AI positions. You can see the official policy [here][1].

> **Note**: While a graduate degree from an English-medium institution may be used to satisfy the First Year Course Requirement, only undergraduate degrees can be used to satisfy the TA/AI Language Proficiency Requirement.

Oral proficiency in English must be demonstrated by one of the following methods:

- Achieving a minimum score of 26 on the speaking subset of the TOEFL iBT, or
- Achieving a minimum score of 8 on the speaking subset of the IELTS, or
- Achieving a minimum score of 50 on the SPEAK, or
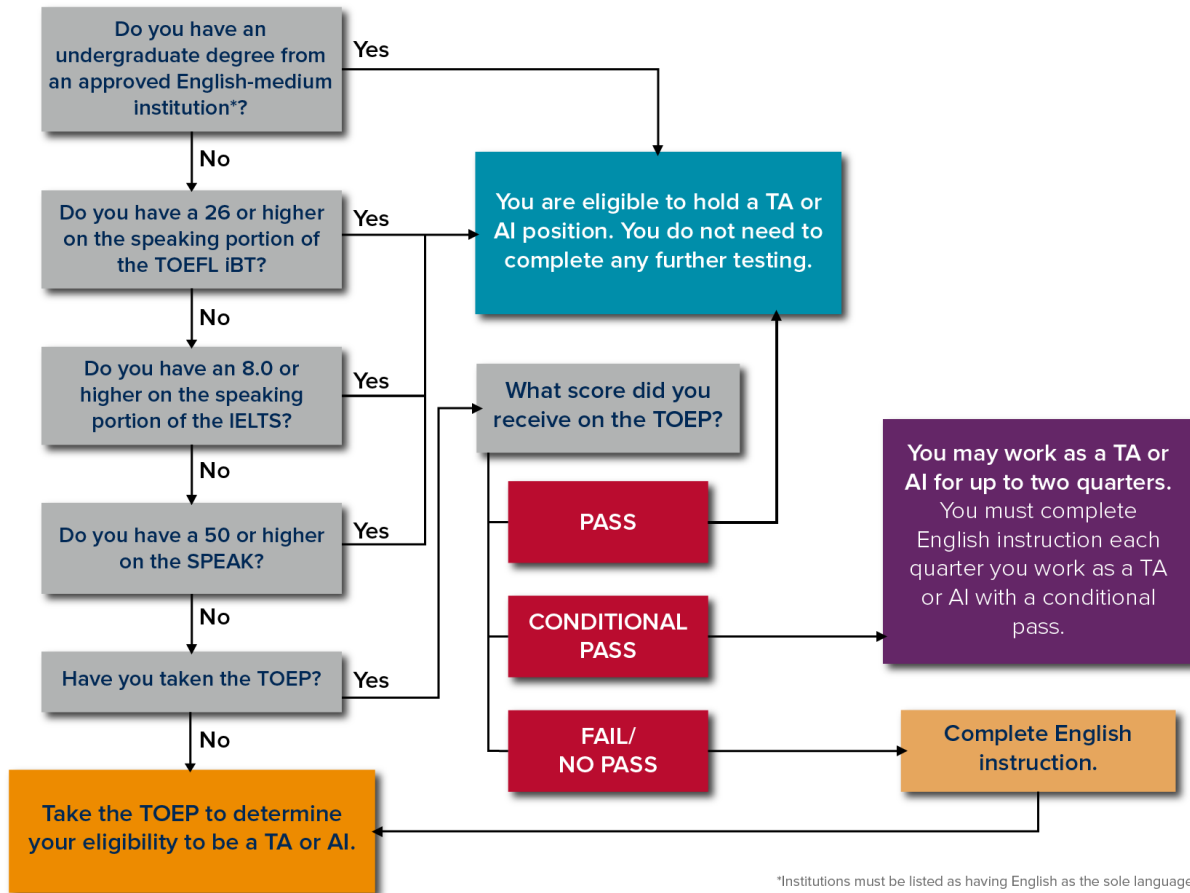- Achieving a "Pass" on the TOEP.

Overview of Oral Proficiency Testing at UC Davis

Students can demonstrate oral proficiency before they begin their studies at UCD with either the TOEFL or IELTS, but the TOEP is the primary tool used for testing students who are on campus. The SPEAK test used to be the primary tool used on campus, but as of the 2018-19 AY, the SPEAK has been totally phased out and replaced by the TOEP. Along with this, students are no longer required to meet eligibility requirements in order to register for the TOEP as they did during 2015-8 when both exams were available on campus.

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[1] https://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/sites/default/files/upload/files/current-students/gs2011-01_appt_reqs_intl_ta-ai.pdf

Language Proficiency Requirement

for Teaching Assistant (TA) and Associate Instructor (AI) Positions

Do you have an undergraduate degree from an approved English-medium institution*? — Yes →

No ↓

Do you have a 26 or higher on the speaking portion of the TOEFL iBT? — Yes →

No ↓

Do you have an 8.0 or higher on the speaking portion of the IELTS? — Yes →

No ↓

Do you have a 50 or higher on the SPEAK? — Yes →

No ↓

Have you taken the TOEP? — Yes →

No ↓

Take the TOEP to determine your eligibility to be a TA or AI.

You are eligible to hold a TA or AI position. You do not need to complete any further testing.

What score did you receive on the TOEP?

- **PASS**
- **CONDITIONAL PASS**
- **FAIL/ NO PASS**

You may work as a TA or AI for up to two quarters. You must complete English instruction each quarter you work as a TA or AI with a conditional pass.

Complete English instruction.

*Institutions must be listed as having English as the sole language of instruction in the World Higher Education Database (WHED) to qualify.
UC Davis Graduate Studies Policy GS2011-01 (rev02)

Test of Oral English Proficiency (TOEP)

If students have not already met the TA/AI language proficiency requirement before coming to Davis and plan to be a TA in the future, they should take the TOEP. In the TOEP, test takers complete a 20-minute simulated classroom exercise with an audience of undergraduate students and test raters. The test taker gives an introduction to the audience, goes over a sample class document, and delivers a mini-lesson. You can see more details about the TOEP at https://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/toep.

TOEP Schedule

The TOEP is offered on multiple dates at the end of each quarter and in the weeks prior to fall quarter. It is recommended that students take the TOEP <u>as early as possible</u> and not wait until the quarter before they want to work as a TA. TOEP scores are made available to all test takers and posted in Banner about a week after the test date. The scores also appear in GradHub. TOEP registration for each quarter is made available on the IAE website a few weeks prior to the test dates for that quarter. Interested individuals can join the IAE grad mailing list (from the IAE website) to receive an email when test registration opens.

TOEP Results

Students receive their results by email and have the option to meet with staff from IAE for feedback and to discuss next steps. There are three possible results:

TOEP: Pass

Students who earn a PASS have fully met the English language requirement for TA/AI positions.

TOEP: Conditional Pass

Students who earn a CONDITIONAL PASS have partially met the English language requirement for TA/AI positions; their oral English skills are reasonably proficient but could still cause some confusion or require additional effort on the part of the undergraduate students they will be teaching. Students who earn a Conditional Pass may hold a TA position for up to two quarters while concurrently enrolled in approved English language instruction (approved by IAE). The two quarters they are permitted to serve as a TA are only allowed <u>once</u>, after the first Conditional Pass. For example, if a student received a Conditional Pass, worked as a TA for two quarters, and then received another Conditional Pass, the student would not be eligible to continue as a TA until they received a Pass on the TOEP.

> #### *Approved English Language Instruction*
> In order for Conditional Pass students to work as TAs, they must be enrolled in approved English language instruction. This includes any of the graduate-level English language courses (UWP 225, UWP 226, or UWP 391), IAE's workshops/seminars, and other workshops/seminars approved by IAE (approval must be received from IAE prior to the start of the quarter). An updated list of approved instruction is maintained here: https://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/qualify.
>
> Of the three UWP courses, **UWP 391** is most recommended for students with a Conditional Pass since the focus of that course is oral English proficiency for TAs.

TOEP: Fail

Students who earn a FAIL are not eligible to hold TA/AI positions. They need to take additional English language coursework and retake the TOEP.

Retaking the TOEP

Students may not take the TOEP twice in the same quarter. Students who wish to retake the TOEP must complete approved English language instruction before each retake. This may be completed with any of the approved instruction listed here: https://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/qualify.

Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK)

Prior to 2015, the SPEAK was the primary tool used for determining TA eligibility. When the TOEP started being offered on campus in 2015, the SPEAK started being used mostly as a way to determine whether a student was eligible to take the TOEP. Moving forward, the SPEAK will not be offered on campus, and all students should take the TOEP instead. The SPEAK assesses general oral English proficiency and is not specific to academic or classroom language skills. As a result, the TOEP – not the SPEAK – is the current instrument for determining whether or not a student is eligible to be a TA or not.

TA Language Requirement App (TALRA)

New--Fall 2019

There is now an online application you can use to see whether or not a student has met the TA/AI language requirement. Since a student's status toward meeting this requirement is not stored in one specific place in Banner, this application will be the easiest place for you to check a student's status. Each student in the app will have a confirmation message summarizing their status regarding the TA/AI Language Proficiency Requirement.

Note: Students must use the app before their status will be recorded, so if you don't see a student's status in the app yet, instruct them to use the app first.

How TALRA Works

For Students

When students access the app, if they have exam scores (TOEFL, IELTS, SPEAK, or TOEP) that indicate they have met the requirement, they will automatically be shown a confirmation message saying they are eligible. If the student does not have exam scores showing they have met the requirement, they will be asked some follow-up questions and then be shown a confirmation message describing their status. Anytime a student returns to the app, they will be shown their current status. Students can access TALRA from here: https://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/TALRA.

For Faculty/Staff

When Faculty/Staff access TALRA, they will be able to see a complete list of students who have used TALRA. They can use the "search filter" box to look for a specific student. After finding a specific student, they can click "view" to see more details including relevant test scores retrieved from Banner, details regarding the student's status, and a history of updates made to the student's status.

Figure 2. Main interface of TALRA for users in the Analyst role (Faculty/Staff)

Figure 3. Example of a student record in TALRA (Faculty/staff can access this page by clicking "view" for the student's record in the main interface; students can access this page only).

TALRA Confirmation Messages

There are five different confirmation messages that may be displayed for a student in TALRA:

- **Eligible** – Students who receive this message have met the TA/AI language proficiency requirement, and this has been confirmed with their scores available in Banner.
- **Self-Reported Eligible (Undergrad)** – These students do not have scores in Banner to automatically list them as eligible, but they self-reported that they completed their undergraduate degree in an English-medium institution.
  - **Note**: If you are potentially hiring students in this status, remember that this confirmation is only based on the responses they provided in the app. You may want to confirm their eligibility with official documentation.
  - **Note**: Both domestic and international students can use this app, and most domestic students will receive this as their confirmation message since they likely have not taken any of the language proficiency exams used to meet this requirement.
- **Self-Reported Eligible (Exam Score)** – These students do not have scores in Banner to automatically list them as eligible, but they self-reported that they have valid TOEFL or IELTS scores they have not yet reported to UCD that make them eligible.
  - **Note**: If you are potentially hiring students in this status, remember that this confirmation is only based on the responses they provided in the app. You may want to confirm their eligibility with official documentation before appointing them to a TA/AI position.
  - **Note:** Students must answer that they have a 26+ on TOEFL Speaking or a 8+ on IELTS Speaking and that the score was valid (no more than two years old) when they started their studies at UCD to receive this message.

- **Conditionally Eligible –** These students have a Conditional Pass on the TOEP but have not met the requirements to be fully eligible. For more details on conditional eligibility, please refer to the section on *TOEP: Conditional Pass* earlier in this document.
- **Ineligible –** These students have not yet met the TA/AI Language Proficiency Requirement and are not eligible to hold TA/AI positions yet.

Request Access to TALRA

If you or your colleagues need access to TALRA, please submit a request form at https://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/TALRAaccess. All faculty and staff who are involved in the hiring process of TAs and AIs are strongly encouraged to use TALRA.

TALRA FAQs

A student's TOEFL score isn't listed in TALRA, but I can see it in GradHub. Why isn't it listed?
TALRA will only retrieve TOEFL & IELTS scores that were valid (less than two years old) when the student started their program at UC Davis.

Should I share this app with my students?
Yes, please! International & Academic English will work with the Office of Graduate Studies each summer to send communication to specific incoming students who may need to take action regarding this requirement. However, departments are strongly encouraged to ask all of their own incoming students to use TALRA so that it can relay the status of as many students as possible.

Can a student's status be manually changed?
Yes, please email International & Academic English at iae@ucdavis.edu and provide the reason the student's status should be changed.

Who should I contact if I need help with using TALRA?
Please contact International & Academic English at iae@ucdavis.edu.

Are there specific guidelines for defining "an institution at which English was the sole language of instruction"?
Yes. To qualify, the institution must have English listed as the only language of instruction in the World Higher Education Database (whed.net).

Contact

You can contact Emily Montgomery in IAE at edmontgomery@ucdavis.edu if you have specific questions about any of the topics contained in this document.

You can contact the University Writing Program about UWP 225, 226, and 391:

- Catherine A Hatzakos cahatzakos@ucdavis.edu
- Kelly Crosby kacrosby@ucdavis.edu