

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL  
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE  
REQUEST FOR DECISION

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**PRESENTED BY:** Kevin Flynn, Chair, Academic Programs Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** June 22, 2017

**SUBJECT:** **English Proficiency Policy – Minimum English proficiency requirements for the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies**

**DECISION REQUESTED:**

*It is recommended:*

*That Council approve the revisions to the minimum English proficiency standards for the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, as per the attached table, effective for the 2018/19 admissions cycle.*

**PURPOSE:**

The university's minimum English proficiency standards are outlined in the English Proficiency Policy, which was approved by Council in October 2015 and confirmed by Senate that same month. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that students admitted to the University of Saskatchewan have the proficiency in English to understand and communicate clearly and to be successful in their academic programs. At the time the policy was approved, consultations were still ongoing with regard to the minimum standards for English proficiency for students in the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS). The changes to the English proficiency standards for CGPS align with the undergraduate requirements at the U of S and align required test scores with U15 comparators.

**CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:**

Applicants for admission to credit programs at the U of S may be required to present proof of English proficiency, and the English Proficiency Policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate applicants for admission to credit programs. The revisions for CGPS students remove the option for remedial admission, which previously allowed students to be admitted with individual band scores that did not meet the minimum standard. With the revisions to the standard, the minimum band requirements have been lowered to 19 for TOEFL and minimum of 6.0 for International English language testing system (IELTS), which allows for greater flexibility in admitting students.

The lowering of the minimum band requirements for IELTS to 6.0 puts the U of S in line with U15 comparator institutions, and using IELTS as the baseline comparator test (as opposed to TOEFL) brings CGPS in line with undergraduate standards.

### **CONSULTATION:**

The CGPS minimum English proficiency standards were reviewed by the Equity and International Committee of CGPS on February 17, 2017, the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee on April 6, 2017, and the CGPS Executive Committee on April 18, 2017. At its May 31 meeting, APC recommended that these minimum standards for English proficiency be approved by University Council at its June 2017 meeting.

### **FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:**

Once approved, the revisions will be communicated to all college and unit stakeholders and web, print, and email will be updated to reflect the latest information on minimum requirements.

As these changes affect admissions, the revisions to the minimum English proficiency requirements for the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will go to Senate for confirmation at its October 2017 meeting.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Appendix C – English proficiency standards for graduate students
- Supporting documentation for revisions to minimum English proficiency standards for the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral studies

The English Proficiency Policy can be found [here](#), for your reference.

## Appendix C: English Proficiency Standards for Graduate Students

If English is not your first language, you must demonstrate English language proficiency in one of the following ways:

### 1) Minimum Test Standards

All scores must be from one exam date, not to be combined with other exam dates. Tests are valid for 24 months after the testing date, and must be valid at the beginning of the student's first term of registration in the graduate program.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST	Minimum Required Score
<b>Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)</b>	<b>86</b>
<i>Reading</i>	19
<i>Listening</i>	19
<i>Speaking</i>	19
<i>Writing</i>	19
<b>International English Language Testing System (IELTS)</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<i>Reading</i>	6.0
<i>Listening</i>	6.0
<i>Speaking</i>	6.0
<i>Writing</i>	6.0
<b>Pearson Test of English (PTE Academic)</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Reading</i>	<b>59</b>
<i>Listening</i>	<b>59</b>
<i>Speaking</i>	<b>59</b>
<i>Writing</i>	<b>59</b>
<b>Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CANTEST)</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<i>Reading</i>	4.5
<i>Listening</i>	4.5
<i>Speaking</i>	4.0
<i>Writing</i>	4.0
<b>Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL)</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>Reading</i>	<b>60</b>
<i>Listening</i>	<b>60</b>
<i>Speaking</i>	<b>60</b>
<i>Writing</i>	<b>60</b>
<b>Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>University of Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)</b>	<b>C</b>

## **2. Completion of an approved English Language Training Program**

- (a) University of Saskatchewan Language Centre U-Prep 2.
- (b) University of Saskatchewan Graduate Pathways Certificate.
- (c) University of Regina Advanced English for Academic Purposes

## **3. Completion of Postsecondary Studies in English**

A minimum of three consecutive years of full-time study in a recognized post-secondary institution, where the language of instruction and examination of the institution is English.

## Memorandum

**To:** Adam Baxter-Jones, Chair, CGPS Faculty Council

**From:** CGPS, Executive Committee

**Date:** April 28, 2017

**Re:** Proposed revision to English proficiency policy

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*The Executive Committee met on April 18, 2017, and reviewed the recommendations of both the Graduate Academic Affairs and the Equity & International Committees of CGPS recommending changes to the minimum English proficiency requirements that would retain the overall IELTS score of 6.5, however with no less than 6.0 in the individual band scores, raise the overall TOEFL test score to 86, with no less than 19 in the individual band scores, and, remove the option of a remedial admission category for English proficiency.*

*The Executive wishes to remind Faculty Council that these changes are ‘minimum’ requirements. Each department has the flexibility to name their own requirements provided they do not go below the minimum requirements. Additionally a suggestion was made that the institution begin collecting statistical on the student relationship between English proficiency and academic performance (currently not tracked).*

*Members passed the following motion: “To recommend changes to the minimum English proficiency requirements that would retain the overall IELTS score of 6.5, however with no less than 6.0 in the individual band scores, raise the overall TOEFL test score to 86, with no less than 19 in the individual band scores, and, remove the option of a remedial admission category for English proficiency. (Ferrari/Scoles)*

If you have any questions, please contact Lori Lisitza at [lori.lisitza@usask.ca](mailto:lori.lisitza@usask.ca).

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## Memorandum

**To:** Adam Baxter-Jones, Chair, CGPS Executive Committee

**From:** Laureen McIntyre, Chair, Graduate Academic Affairs Committee of CGPS

**Date:** April 13, 2017

**Re:** Proposed revision to English proficiency policy

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The Graduate Academic Affairs Committee met on April 6, 2017, and considered changes to the English proficiency standards. The changes include aligning CGPS requirements with undergraduate requirements on campus and better aligning required test scores with U15 comparators. Detailed information on the proposed changes is provided in the supporting documentation.

A member asked why the proposal included removing the allowance for a remedial score, wondering if there was data to support the requirements, or if we were simply aligning ourselves with other institutions. He indicated it would be beneficial to know the English proficiency scores of students that do not complete their programs to determine if English proficiency may have been a barrier.

Members passed the following motion: *To recommend changes to the minimum English proficiency requirements that would retain the overall IELTS score of 6.5, however with no less than 6.0 in the individual band scores, raise the overall TOEFL test score to 86, with no less than 19 in the individual band scores, and, remove the option of a remedial admission category for English proficiency.* Bruneau/Chibbar Unanimous

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Clement at [kelly.clement@usask.ca](mailto:kelly.clement@usask.ca) or 306-966-2229.

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## Memorandum

**To:** Chair, CGPS Graduate Academic Affairs Committee

**CC:** Dr. Hugo Cota-Sanchez, Chair, Equity & International Committee of Graduate Council  
Dr. Adam Baxter-Jones, Dean, CGPS

**From:** Equity & International Committee of Graduate Council

**Date:** February 21, 2017

**Re:** Minimum English Proficiency Requirements for Graduate Students

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At their meeting on February 17, 2017, the Equity and International Committee (EIC) reviewed the information provided in the attached discussion paper on the current and proposed changes for English Proficiency Requirements for graduate students. Members discussed the action taken by University Council to approve adopting the IELTS test as the standard point of reference against which other English proficiency tests are measured and agreed that, given the evidence emerging over the last dozen years, this was appropriate. It provides for greater equity between applicants using the two most common tests, the IELTS and the TOEFL, and, it better safeguards that incoming international students have the minimum proficiency levels associated with academic success in a graduate program.

It was agreed that, given the comparator data between IELTS and TOEFL tests and that the IELTS overall test score was to remain at 6.5, it was necessary to raise the minimum overall proficiency required by applicants using the TOEFL test to 86. It should be noted that the purpose of this change was to instill test parity, not raise the overall English proficiency requirements.

Lowering the band requirements to a minimum of 19 for TOEFL and a minimum of 6.0 for the IELTS generated further discussion. It was concluded that to have an overall of 86, a student must have higher than 19 in two or three of the individual band scores (reading, writing, listening and speaking). By allowing one, or even two scores to be at 19 (previous requirement was 20, unless a student was being admitted as remedial qualified) we are providing a greater degree of flexibility. The same rationale supports allowing the IELTS minimum band score to be at 6.0. However, in doing this members also felt that there was no longer the need to provide a “remedial admission” option for students.

One member raised the issue of the University’s international rankings, noting that the number of international students registered in degree programs, particularly Ph.D. programs, has a positive influence on the reputational factoring into some global ranking formulas. This, combined with slightly lower requirements than our competitors, could in turn could have a positive influence on enrolments. Although there was agreement among members that international reputation does have an impact on enrolments, the majority of EIC members were not supportive of this suggestion. They felt that lowering the English proficiency requirements, or test band requirements further, was not a solution to increasing enrolments. Enrolments are influenced by numerous factors, including available funding and supervisor capacity. It is important that the University is comparable with other U15 institutions, and the comparative data presented in the attached briefing document indicates that, for TOEFL the UofS

current graduate standards are lower than the norm. However, for IELTS, the proposal to retain the overall test requirements of 6.5, but drop the band requirements to no less than 6.0, would place us right in line with our competitors.

Maintaining equitable standards with our peer institutions is critical, particularly at the PhD level where students must do qualifying and comprehensive exams, and, engage fully in scholarly debate. In these realms failure can arise, not as a result of poor academic knowledge, but because of a lack of proficiency in English. It was also noted that individual units may, following the appropriate processes for recommending program changes, have approved minimum English proficiency requirements that are higher than those set by the CGPS.

EIC members unanimously passed the motion: ***“To recommend changes to the minimum English proficiency requirements that would retain the overall IELTS score of 6.5, however with no less than 6.0 in the individual band scores, raise the overall TOEFL test score to 86, with no less than 19 in the individual band scores, and, remove the option of a remedial admission category for English proficiency.”***

The chart below summarizes the current requirements and the recommended changes for English proficiency for the admission of graduate students into degree programs.

	TOEFL		IELTS	
	Current	Recommended	Current	Recommended
Overall Test Score	80	86	6.5	6.5
Individual Band Score	No band below 20	No band below 19	No band below 6.5	No band below 6.0
Remedial Score	One band at 18 or 19	No remedial option	One band at 6.0	No remedial option

The EIC is requesting that the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee consider this recommendation with a view of approving the changes, and, forwarding them to the Executive Committee for consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact Penny Skilnik at [penny.skilnik@usask.ca](mailto:penny.skilnik@usask.ca), or, 966-2022.

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## ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE ADMISSION

The language of instruction at the University of Saskatchewan is English and in order for graduate students to be successful in their courses and research endeavors, a minimum level of proficiency in academic English is required. The acceptable minimum standards of English proficiency, including in the written, spoken, reading and listening components, are set by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies through approved graduate faculty policies. The minimum entrance requirements for English proficiency (policy 4.1) for graduate student admission were last revised in 2011 at which time minimum band levels were instated for the IELTS test. It should be noted that, although the CGPS establishes the minimum proficiency requirements, academic units may propose and receive approval for higher than the minimum requirements for admission into their graduate programs.

The CGPS has been asked to re-evaluate the minimum requirements for English proficiency for graduate admission to degree programs. This document provides some background and comparator information to help inform the discussion.

### **A. Background**

During the 2014/2015 academic term, a project was undertaken to review the English proficiency requirements for undergraduate and graduate admissions. The rationale for the project was that there was more current information available on the comparability of test scores across the common testing tools, primarily the IELTS and the TOEFL tests. It was also deemed important to ensure there was consistency in using test sub-score minimums across these most common testing tools. In other words, is a TOEFL test score of 80 equivalent to an IELTS 6.5, and, is the writing score of 20 in TOEFL equivalent to an IELTS writing score of 6.5?

Research was completed to capture the minimum test scores required for both undergraduate and graduate admission among U15 institutions. A survey was undertaken to determine if the U of S requirements for English proficiency were in line with those of competitor institutions across Canada and within the province.

IELTS, TOEFL and other test research was examined including comparability studies of test scores across common test tools and within the four different elements of proficiency - reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The project drew upon the expertise of the language instructors within the University of Saskatchewan Language Centre and outcomes of this research included:

- An IELTS 6.5 overall test score reflects a higher degree of proficiency than an overall TOEFL test score of 80;
- The sub-test band scores across testing tools were not well aligned with those of our comparators;

As a result, a proposal for a revised English proficiency policy (copy attached) went forward to University Council on September 17, 2015 and was subsequently approved. It is important to note that the standards were not changed, but proof of the minimum standard has become more fine-tuned. Key points included:

- The IELTS test replaced the TOEFL as the baseline comparator;
- The minimum required English proficiency score required for admission to an undergraduate program remained at an IELTS of 6.5;
- Based on the research available, other test scores were adjusted slightly to more accurately reflect comparative levels of proficiency to the baseline IELTS test. Most significantly, the TOEFL equivalent of IELTS 6.5 was to an overall 86 with no less than 19 in each sub-score area.

On September 17, 2015 University Council approved a policy on English Proficiency noting that *“This policy will replace the English Proficiency Requirements for Undergraduate Direct Entry Colleges approved by APC in 2009.”* and *“This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate applicants for admission to credit programs.”* At that time, undergraduate admissions proposed revised minimum test score requirements for the TOEFL test, and,

revised sub-test band score requirements for the IELTS test. No changes were proposed or approved for the minimum entrance requirements for English proficiency for graduate admissions at that time.

## B. Graduate Studies Context

The findings into test equivalency comparisons led to the decision by University Council to adopt the IELTS test as the baseline evaluation tool against which other English proficiency tests are compared. These findings, which informed the fine-tuning of the criteria required for proof of proficiency for the two most common testing tools, the IELTS test and the TOEFL test, are equally valid in the graduate context.

There will always be differing opinions as to which test, either the TOEFL or the IELTS, provides a better assessment of a student's English proficiency. However, many experts consider the IELTS test as being more creditable as a standard point of reference against which other tests are compared and aligned. Further support of the University's selection of IELTS as the baseline assessment tool, particularly in the context of graduate admission requirements, is the process used to assess the verbal proficiency of students. The TOEFL speaking section involves the student summarizing or interpreting information from a secondary source and explaining their opinions into a recorder, which is then reviewed by an evaluator. It is not interactive, whereas with the IELTS, the speaking test is done in person and it includes a short speech and an interactive conversation component.

It is also important to consider such a change in the context of the post-graduate landscape in Canada and the English proficiency requirements for admission among U15 comparator institutions. A survey of the English proficiency requirements for graduate admission among U15 institutions was completed in January 2017. The findings, which are available in the attached summary report *Comparison of Minimum English Proficiency Requirements (U-15 plus U of R)*, indicate that changes to the CGPS requirements for English proficiency are required to maintain an optimum standard. For this discussion, an optimum standard is defined as sufficiently high proficiency requirements to ensure adequate student capacity in English for academic success, while still maintaining a central position in comparison to other universities so as not to be at a competitive disadvantage. Results for institutions where the language of instruction is French have not been included in the summarized findings below:

- Four of the fourteen institutions have minimum TOEFL test requirements of 80 overall, including the UofS, which means that the UofS requirements are in the bottom quartile of Canadian comparator institutions.
- The average minimum overall test score required for TOEFL is 86.
- Only the University of Ottawa has no minimum band scores for the TOEFL test; all other institutions have required minimum sub-test scores of 20 or higher.
- The majority of institutions surveyed have minimum IELTS test requirements of 6.5 overall, including the UofS. Three universities had higher requirements (overall IELTS of 7.0) and only one university has a lower requirement (overall IELTS of 6.0)

Based on a review of the comparator data, we can conclude that the current IELTS overall minimum proficiency score of 6.5 is in line with the graduate admission requirements of almost all other U15 institutions. However, an increase to the TOEFL overall minimum proficiency score (currently at 80) is necessary to assure alignment between these two assessment tools.

When examining the sub-test requirements of comparator institutions for the IELTS test, there is more variation between the various universities.

- Three universities have no minimum band requirements;
- Two universities require a 5.0 score in all four bands;
- Six universities require a 6.0 score in all four bands;
- Only three universities require a minimum of 6.5 in all four bands, including the U of S, the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo.

Given that the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo have the highest English proficiency requirement for the IELTS test (overall score of 7.0), it is not surprising that they also have the highest proficiency requirements for the IELTS individual band test scores (no less than 6.5 in each band).

By contrast, whereas the U of S requires a minimum IELTS score of 6.5 overall for graduate admission, students must also achieve no less than 6.5 in each of the four sub-test bands. All other institutions that require a minimum of 6.5 in an applicant's overall IELTS test score have minimum band requirements of 5.0 to 6.0. This illuminates two concerns: there is a disconnect between the overall test score requirement and the minimums allowable for the four sub-test bands, and, the significantly higher requirements for the sub-test bands at the U of S puts the institution at a competitive disadvantage.

## C. Conclusion and Recommendations for Discussion

The University's adoption of the IELTS test as the standard point of reference against which other tests are compared and aligned in 2015 has provided a more reliable framework for determining minimum admission requirements for English proficiency. The minimum admission requirement for the TOEFL test should be raised to create a greater degree of correlation between it and the IELTS test. This would help to bring a greater degree of consistency between the English proficiency levels of newly admitted students regardless of what assessment tool is used.

This process would be inadequate if it was not also informed by the information on the minimum English proficiency requirements of the other U15 institutions. Aligning the minimum TOEFL test requirements with those of the IELTS required raising the overall TOEFL test score to 86. The findings of the comparator scan would support this change. By contrast, although the overall test score for minimum proficiency as demonstrated by the IELTS test should remain at 6.5, comparator evaluations indicate that a reduction of the minimum requirements in the IELTS sub-test scores is in order.

The following recommended Minimum English Proficiency Requirements for IELTS and TOEFL Tests are offered for consideration.

	TOEFL		IELTS	
	Current	Recommended	Current	Recommended
Overall Test Score	80	86	6.5	6.5
Individual band test scores	No band below 20	No band below 19	No band below 6.5	No band below 6.0
Remedial Score	One band at 18 or 19	No remedial option	One band at 6.0	No remedial option

It should be noted that the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is responsible for setting the minimum English proficiency requirements for the admission of graduate students into degree programs. Individual units however have the option to recommend and have approved higher requirements for their respective programs than those established by the College.

### Comparison of Minimum English Proficiency Requirements (U-15 plus U of R)

Note: Listed below are the minimum admission requirements. Specific programs may have higher or additional requirements.

Institution	TOEFL <sup>1</sup>		IELTS	
	Grad	Undergrad	Grad	Undergrad
University of Saskatchewan <sup>2</sup>	80 overall; no band below 20  Remedial qualified 80 overall; with one band at 18 or 19.	86 overall; no band below 19	6.5 overall; no band below 6.5;  Remedial qualified: 6.5 overall; with one band at 6.0.	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0
University of Regina <sup>3</sup>	80 overall; no band below 20	80 overall; Reading: 19; Listening: 19; Speaking: 18; Writing: 18.	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0	6.5 overall; no band below 5.0.
University of Alberta <sup>4</sup>	88 overall; no bands below 20	86 overall; no band below 21	6.5 overall; no band below 5.0	6.5 overall; no band below 5.0
University of British Columbia <sup>5</sup>	90 overall; with minimum: Reading: 22, Listening: 22, Writing: 21, Speaking: 21.	90 overall; with minimum of: Reading: 22, Listening: 22, Writing: 21, Speaking: 21.	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0.	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0.
University of Calgary <sup>6</sup>	86 overall; no band below 20	86 overall; no minimum bands	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0	6.5 overall; no minimum bands
Dalhousie University <sup>7</sup>	90 overall; no bands below 20	90 overall; no bands below 20	6.5 overall; no bands below 6.0	6.5 overall; no bands below 6.0
Université Laval	N/A: French-language university		N/A: French-language university	

<sup>1</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, internet-based TOEFL scores are used. As a rule, institutional TOEFL is not accepted.

<sup>2</sup> <http://explore.usask.ca/admissions/elp.php>; <https://grad.usask.ca/admissions/admission-requirements.php>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/future-students/international-students/before-apply/english-requirements.html>; <https://urconnected.uregina.ca/apply/elp.ezc>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/prospective4-students/international-admissions-protocol/english-language-proficiency>; <http://admissions.ualberta.ca/requirements/language-requirements.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://you.ubc.ca/applying-ubc/english-language-competency/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://grad.ucalgary.ca/future/admissions/admission-requirements>; <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/a-11.html>.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dal.ca/admissions/international\\_students/admissions/graduate-requirements.html](http://www.dal.ca/admissions/international_students/admissions/graduate-requirements.html); [http://www.dal.ca/admissions/international\\_students/admissions/english-requirements.html](http://www.dal.ca/admissions/international_students/admissions/english-requirements.html).

Institution	TOEFL		IELTS	
	Grad	Undergrad	Grad	Undergrad
University of Manitoba <sup>8</sup>	86 overall; no bands below 20	86 overall; no bands below 20	6.5 overall; no minimum bands	6.5 overall; no minimum bands
McGill University <sup>9</sup>	86 overall, no bands below 20	90 overall; no bands below 21	6.5 overall; no band below 5.5	6.5 overall; no bands below 6.0
McMaster University <sup>10</sup>	80 overall; no bands below 20	86 overall; no bands below 20	6.5 overall, no band below 5.5	6.5 overall; no band below 5.0
Université de Montréal	N/A: French-language university		N/A: French-language university	
University of Ottawa	79 overall; no minimum bands	86 overall; minimum 22 in writing	6.5 overall; no band below 5.0	6.5 overall, minimum 6.5 in Writing.
Queen's University <sup>11</sup>	88 overall; minimum 24 writing 22speaking, 22 reading, 20 listening.	88 overall; minimum 24 writing 22speaking, 22 reading, 20 listening.	7.0 overall	6.5 overall
University of Toronto <sup>12</sup>	93 overall; minimum 22 writing, 22 speaking	93 overall; minimum 22 writing, 22 speaking	7.0 overall; no band below 6.5	7.0 overall; no band below 6.5
University of Waterloo <sup>13</sup>	90 overall; minimum 25 writing, 25 speaking	90 overall; minimum 25 writing, 25 speaking	7.0 overall; minimum 6.5 writing, 6.5 speaking	7.0 overall
University of Western Ontario <sup>14</sup>	86 overall; no band below 20	83 overall; no band below 20	6.0 overall	6.5 overall; no band below 6.0.

<sup>8</sup> [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/graduate\\_studies/admissions/139.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/graduate_studies/admissions/139.html); <http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/admissions/international/english/>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mcgill.ca/gradapplicants/international/apply/proficiency>; <http://www.mcgill.ca/applying/how-we-make-decisions/proof-english-proficiency>.

<sup>10</sup> [http://mech.mcmaster.ca/graduate\\_admissions.html](http://mech.mcmaster.ca/graduate_admissions.html); <http://future.mcmaster.ca/admission/language/>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.queensu.ca/sqs/prospective-students/preparing-graduate-studies>; <http://www.queensu.ca/admission/apply-high-school/how-apply/required-documents/test-facility-english>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.sqs.utoronto.ca/prospectivestudents/Pages/English-Language-Proficiency-Testing.aspx>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/discover-graduate-studies/admission-requirements/english-language-proficiency-elp>; <https://uwaterloo.ca/find-out-more/admissions/english-language-requirements>.

<sup>14</sup> [http://grad.uwo.ca/prospective\\_students/applying/index.html](http://grad.uwo.ca/prospective_students/applying/index.html); [http://www.welcome.uwo.ca/admissions/admission\\_requirements/english\\_language\\_proficiency.html](http://www.welcome.uwo.ca/admissions/admission_requirements/english_language_proficiency.html).



## ***English Proficiency Policy***

Category:	<i>Leave this blank; a category will be assigned</i>
Number:	<i>Leave this blank; a number will be assigned</i>
Responsibility:	Director of Enrolment and Student Affairs
Approval:	<i>University Council, Senate</i>
Date:	<i>Date initially approved:</i> <i>Date(s) reformatted or revised</i>

### ***Purpose:***

Minimum standards of English proficiency are required to ensure that students can understand and communicate clearly in order to be successful in their academic programs.

### ***Principles:***

The language of instruction and examination at the University of Saskatchewan is English. In order for students to understand, communicate and be successful in programs at the university, an acceptable level of academic English is required (including written, spoken, reading and listening components).

### ***Scope of this Policy:***

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students in credit programs and sets: minimum English proficiency standards; authority for reviewing and setting minimum proficiency standards; and acceptable forms of proof of English proficiency.

### ***Policy:***

1. Applicants for admission to credit programs at the University may be required to present proof of proficiency in English.
2. Proof of English proficiency may be demonstrated through:
  - a. Years of study in an English-language curriculum secondary school or post-secondary institution, where the primary language of instruction and examination of the institution is English; or
  - b. An accepted standardized test of English proficiency; or
  - c. Successful completion of the English for Academic Purposes Program at the University of Saskatchewan or an intensive English as a second language program that is deemed equivalent to the University of Saskatchewan program; or
  - d. Successful completion of the Graduate Pathways Certificate at the University of Saskatchewan for graduate students.

3. Applicants who do not meet minimum standards of English proficiency are not admissible to credit programs.

## ***Responsibilities***

The Admissions and Transfer Credit Office determines minimum test scores and equivalents to the minimum standard, in consultation with the University Language Centre, the College of Graduate Studies and Research, college stakeholders, and Academic Programs Committee.

Minimum standards and changes to standards will be approved as appropriate through Faculty Councils, Academic Programs Committee and University Council.

Colleges may approve higher than minimum standards through their Faculty Councils, Academic Programs Committee and University Council.

Admissions offices apply the approved standards when reviewing applications for admission.

## ***Procedures:***

The Admissions & Transfer Credit Office maintains the following appendices:

1. Appendix A – Minimum standards of English proficiency for Undergraduate Students
2. Appendix B – Approved standards of English proficiency for Undergraduate Students higher than minimum
3. Appendix C – Minimum standards of English proficiency for Graduate Students

## ***Contact:***

Alison Pickrell, Director  
Enrolment & Student Affairs  
306-966-6820





## Memorandum

**To:** Academic Programs Committee of Council

**From:** Alison Pickrell, Director of Enrolment & Student Affairs  
(English Proficiency Policy sponsor)

**Date:** May 28, 2017

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In fall 2015, the University of Saskatchewan approved an English proficiency policy. This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate applicants for admission to credit programs at the University. The policy states that proof of English proficiency may be required for admission, and it outlines the ways that English proficiency can be demonstrated and it clarifies roles and responsibilities. All acceptable forms of proof of English proficiency, including years of study in English and tests of English proficiency with minimum scores are captured in policy appendices. Minimum test standards for graduate students were tagged as under review.

The College's Equity and International Committee, and Graduate Academic Affairs Committee reviewed a detailed discussion paper and recommended changes to the current English proficiency requirements including aligning CGPS requirements with undergraduate requirements on campus and better aligning required test scores with U15 comparators. Detailed information on the proposed changes is provided in the supporting documentation.

*Graduate Faculty Council approved the following motion at their meeting of May 9, 2017:*

*"To recommend changes to the minimum English proficiency requirements that would retain the overall IELTS score of 6.5, however with no less than 6.0 in the individual band scores, raise the overall TOEFL test score to 86, with no less than 19 in the individual band scores, and, remove the option of a remedial admission category for English proficiency".*

A revised *Appendix C: English Proficiency Standards for Graduate Students* is being presented to Academic Programs Committee of Council for information. These changes will come into effect for graduate students being admitted to the 2018-19 academic year, which begins May 1, 2018.

### **Notes from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies**

The University's adoption of the IELTS test as the standard point of reference against which other tests are compared and aligned in 2015 has provided a more reliable framework for determining minimum admission requirements for English proficiency. It was determined that the minimum admission requirement for the TOEFL test should be raised to create a greater degree of correlation between it and the IELTS test. This would help to bring a greater degree of consistency between the English proficiency levels of newly admitted students regardless of what assessment tool is used.

This process would be inadequate if it was not also informed by the information on the minimum English proficiency requirements of the other U15 institutions. Aligning the minimum TOEFL test requirements with those of the IELTS required raising the overall TOEFL test score to 86. The findings of the comparator scan would support this change. By contrast, although the overall test score for minimum proficiency as demonstrated by the IELTS test should remain at 6.5, comparator evaluations indicate that a reduction of the minimum requirements in the IELTS sub-test scores is in order.

In addition, the CGPS continues its effort to collaborate more closely with other central offices (such as undergraduate admissions), to develop and commit to more consistent institutional standards. These changes allow graduate admissions to align with institutional standards which have already undergone a robust development and approval process.

There are some who believe that language proficiency standards should be set higher for graduate program admission, than for undergraduate admission. The opinion seems to vary among faculty, and is largely dependent on the specific discipline in question. It should be noted that although the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is responsible for setting the minimum English proficiency requirements for the admission of graduate students into degree programs, individual academic units do have the option to recommend and have approved higher requirements for their respective programs, than those established by the College.