

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Terry Wotherspoon; Chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: April 19, 2018

SUBJECT: **Admissions Qualifications change – English proficiency requirements for graduate programs in Plant Sciences**

DECISION REQUESTED:

*It is recommended:
That Council approve the proposed changes to the English proficiency requirements for graduate programs in Plant Sciences, effective May 2019.*

PURPOSE:

Changes to admissions qualifications require approval by University Council and confirmation by University Senate.

The English Proficiency Policy and associated procedures allow for colleges to approve higher than minimum standards through their faculty councils, APC, and University Council.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) recently made changes to the English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs as part of the approval of the English Proficiency Policy and the college-level procedures. In response to these revised standards, the Department of Plant Science is proposing a change for students applying for their graduate programs – that applicants be required to have a minimum TOEFL band score of 20 (CGPS minimum is 19) for each band. For IELTS, Plant Sciences would like a minimum of 6.5 for each band (CGPS minimum is 6.0).

The proposed changes are to ensure that applicants are adequately prepared for the research-based graduate programs in Plant Sciences, in accordance with past practice in the Department.

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

University Senate will be asked to confirm this decision at their October 2018 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposal for changes to admissions requirements for Plant Sciences graduate programs

Memorandum

To: Terry Wotherspoon, Chair, Academic Programs Committee of University Council

CC: Tom Warkentin, Graduate Chair, Department of Plant Sciences

From: Office of the Associate Dean, College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS)

Date: March 28, 2018

Re: Amendments to the English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) recently made changes to the English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs. The changes were implemented for students being admitted on or after May 1, 2018. In response to the revised standards for English proficiency, the Department of Plant Sciences proposed minor changes. The proposed changes consist of a slight increase in the requirements for individual testing band scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). CGPS requires individual TOEFL band scores of 19, and the Department of Plant Sciences would like to require 20. For the IELTS, CGPS requires individual band scores of 6.0, and the Department of Plant Sciences would like to require 6.5.

The Graduate Programs Committee supported the proposed changes on March 6, 2018, and the CGPS Executive Committee supported the proposed changes on March 22, 2018.

The proposed changes would help potential applicants be aware of expectations for admission eligibility for graduate programs in Plant Sciences.

Please note that consultation with the registrar was not required, as the proposal would not impact the student information system.

Attached please find:

- A copy of the memo from the Executive Committee of CGPS recommending the proposal
- A copy of the memo from the Graduate Programs Committee of CGPS recommending the proposal
- The recommendation from the Department of Plant Sciences

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly.clement@usask.ca (306-966-2229).

:kc

Memorandum

To: Terry Wotherspoon, Chair, Academic Programs Committee of University Council

Copy: Tom Warkentin, Graduate Chair, Department of Plant Sciences

From: Trever Crowe, Chair, Executive Committee of CGPS

Date: March 27, 2018

Re: English Proficiency Admission Requirements in Plant Sciences Graduate Programs

On March 22, 2018, the Executive Committee (EC), considered a recommendation from the Graduate Programs Committee (GPC) to support approval for changes to English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences. The EC passed the following motion:

“To recommend approval of the proposed English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences.” McQuillan/Somerville CARRIED Unanimous

The EC discussion is summarized as follows:

- The proposal was to reintroduce minimum area test scores that had changed when CGPS English proficiency requirements were changed, to be effective for students entering graduate programs on or after May 1, 2018. The former and current CGPS standards are indicated in the table below, with the requirements proposed for Plant Sciences graduate programs highlighted.

	TOEFL		IELTS	
	Former	Current	Former	Current
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

- It was clarified that the role of CGPS is to establish minimum admission standards for all graduate programs, and that it was both reasonable and appropriate for individual programs to propose higher standards or additional requirements to best manage admissions in the individual disciplinary areas.
- It was also noted that officially changing and posting the English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences were the most appropriate steps to provide clear expectations on admission eligibility to prospective students.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Clement at kelly.clement@usask.ca or 306-966-2229.

:kc

Memorandum

To: Executive Committee of CGPS

From: Graduate Programs Committee of CGPS

Date: March 15, 2018

Re: Plant Sciences – change to admission requirements – English proficiency

In March 2018, the Graduate Programs Committee (GPC), considered changes to the English proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences. This proposal results from recent changes to the CGPS English proficiency requirements to align the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores. The changes were effective for students entering programs on or after May 1, 2018. The changes were as follows:

	TOEFL		IELTS	
	Former	Current	Former	Current
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 Department of Plant Sciences is proposing to reinstate the former minimum individual band score requirements, while retaining the current overall test score requirements.

The GPC was satisfied with the proposal noting that each area of proficiency (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) were vital to success in the research-based graduate programs in Plant Sciences.

The GPC passed the following motion unanimously:

To recommend approval of the proposed language proficiency requirements for admission to graduate programs in Plant Sciences. Pollak/Khan CARRIED

Attached please find:

- the proposal memo

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Clement at kelly.clement@usask.ca or 306-966-2229.

:kc

2 March 2018

To: Kelly Clement Graduate Academic Affairs and Programs, College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

From: Tom Warkentin, Professor, Graduate Chair, Department of Plant Sciences,

Re: English requirements for graduate students in Plant Sciences

Dear Kelly, As indicated by email, the Department of Plant Sciences would like to retain the English language requirements that have been in place in our department over the past several years as follows.

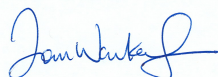
Language Proficiency Requirements: Proof of English proficiency may be required for international applicants and for applicants whose first language is not English. A minimum overall TOEFL score of 86 is required with a minimum score of 20 in each area, or a minimum overall IELTS score of 6.5 with a minimum score of 6.5 in each area.

The rationale for this request includes the following:

- PLSC has a high proportion of international students
- Several years ago PLSC increased the requirement for English proficiency to the standards indicated above and this has proven beneficial to the overall experience of graduate students and supervisors.

I will appreciate if you bring this request forward to appropriate University governance committees on our behalf.

Sincerely,



Tom Warkentin, PLSC Graduate Chair

cc: Ann Harley, Graduate student coordinator, College of AgBio
Yuguang Bai, Department Head, PLSC