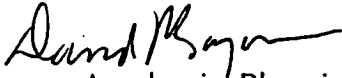


FOR INFORMATION

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
*Office of the Vice-President Academic*

MEMORANDUM

**To:** Senate

**From:** D. Gagan, Chair   
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

**Subject:** Proposed Intensive English for International Students - Pilot Program  
(SCUS Reference: SCUS 97-57)  
(SCAP Reference: SCAP 98-1)

**Date:** January 14, 1998

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Acting under delegated authority, the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies approved the following:

Proposed Intensive English for International Students -  
Pilot Program

# Proposed Intensive English for International Students -- Pilot Program

1. *Implement a pilot program commencing in 1998 for a three year period.*

Small cohorts of students who do not meet current English admission standards (15 to 30 students initially) would be admitted, placed in specially designed Intensive English courses, and supported and tracked as they move on to become regular students.

2. *Require a usual minimum TOEFL (or equivalent) for admission to this Intensive English course of 540.*

Our current admission standard of TOEFL 570/TWE 5 is seen as an obstacle to many international students whose other academic qualifications are first-rate. Canada in general has a reputation as requiring very high TOEFL scores. If the TOEFL instruments were effective measures, this might be seen as a mark of high standards, but experience has shown that a TOEFL number is not a reliable measure of proficiency in academic English. The goal of the proposed pilot program is to prototype a route for good international students to take into the University through which they will receive both the necessary language training and a reliable certification of proficiency.

Education Centres in Canadian Embassies in Asia cite TOEFL 520 as a reasonable level of performance to expect from their clients; setting the level at 540 has been done in consultation with language experts and is conservative by design. If the pilot shows that a lower entrance threshold can be handled reasonably in an Intensive English course, it can be lowered later on.

3. *Admit students under this pilot program who meet the other published requirements for admission at a standard at, or higher than, that in place for admission to a program/faculty/the University*

This is not intended as a back door for marginal students. On the contrary, the expectation is that the pilot cohorts will be from the group of excellent international students the University cannot now recruit only because their TOEFL mark is not up to our standard, i. e. proficiency in English will be their only academic qualification requiring validation.

4. *Develop a special non-credit course in English as a Second Language, with section(s) of the course to be conducted in each of 98-3, 99-1 and 99-2.*

An Intensive English course of 12 weeks duration (5 hours of instruction daily, 5 days a week), with associated cultural and socialization programs, will be designed and offered by September, 1998.

A lecturer with advanced academic qualifications and experience in Teaching English as a Second Language will be appointed as the team leader, and other lecturers, sessionals, and TAs will be appointed as needed to service the classroom contact requirements of the cohort.

5. *Establish a reliable measure to be accepted in lieu of the current TOEFL/English language requirement for regular admission during the pilot program.*

As part of this program, the University will explore alternative measures of English proficiency which could eventually be used as a standard for international admissions in general. We will identify a suitably well-established international examination and administer it to students in the program, perhaps with a second examination as a control. A standard level of achievement on this examination (rather than TOEFL) will be set as the condition for continuance in subsequent semesters under regular admission to the University.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is being explored as the potential examination instrument for proficiency testing in this program. It is managed by the testing agency of Cambridge University, administered worldwide by the British Council, and is widely accepted for admission to universities, including several in Canada. Early contacts indicate they are interested in having SFU become a testing centre for them; the only other centre in Canada is the University of Toronto. The test itself is more comprehensive than TOEFL, and experience indicates it is a more reliable predictor of English proficiency for the university setting (it is designed specifically for testing academic English proficiency). If successful in this trial phase, this examination could become the main standard for admission to SFU for all international students.

6. *Move students directly into a regular credit program at the University as specified in the offer of*

*admission upon attaining the required level of proficiency under the examination required.*

Students who achieve the required score on the examination at the end of the Intensive English course will be allowed to register in regular classes in the semester following their Intensive English semester. Some coordination with programs to provide transitional courses and instructional environments will be undertaken to test the usefulness of such follow-up programming. This may include special sessions of 'University 101,' special writing course sections from the English Department or faculty-specific writing courses, or ESL-aware TAs in introductory courses.

7. *Provide an opportunity for a student who is unsuccessful (does not meet the standard expected) to repeat the Intensive English course on one occasion only*

Achieving the required minimum for admission will be a hard criterion for continuation, but students should be given a second chance to achieve the level required. The intent of the program is to achieve reliable and consistent results, and the implication of this is that there will be a percentage who will fail to meet the standard.

8. *Operate the Intensive English course on a full cost recovery basis*

All instructional and administrative costs will be covered by a course fee. A preliminary budget has set this figure at \$3250, which is comparable to similar programs in Canada (e. g. U. Vic) and cheaper than those in the U. S.

9. *Make unallocated spaces in the non-credit course available to other individuals who may require such tuition.*

In case not all course places are filled, there may be students who are not recruited internationally, (e. g. recent immigrants) but who are not confident enough of their academic English to proceed directly into regular coursework who could benefit from the Intensive English course.

10. *Monitor the pilot program to assess its viability as a potential component of an ongoing student recruitment system.*

The progress of the cohort admitted to the pilot group will be monitored from the start, following them well into their careers as regular students. During the pilot program, the Office of the Registrar and the Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, will monitor the pilot program, including but not limited to demand for the course, performance of students in the course itself, continuance of students successful in the course into regular University programs, and subsequent success of students in regular programs. The participation of the instructional and administrative staff will be reviewed regularly to assure a high level of support for students and to assess and adjust the service provided so that the success of the project can be measured on a 'best effort' basis. The academic performance of students after they move on as regular students will be tracked in correlation with the results on the English proficiency examination to determine the relative effectiveness of this testing scheme as a predictor of success.

11. *Report back on the success of the program and its utility for ongoing international recruitment plans*

A report on the success of the program will be presented to SCUS with recommendations as to the future of the program after one year. If the program does not show promise of serving its purpose to the University, it can be discontinued; otherwise it will run its course as a 3-year pilot. At the end of three years, a comprehensive evaluation will be undertaken and transmitted to SCUS along with recommendations as to the long-term future of the program. At that time, follow-up data on continuing student success rates should be available, and an accurate forecast of long-term cost vs. benefits of continuing the program could be projected. The usefulness of having an alternate English proficiency certification in place would at that point become reasonably clear.