

MEMO

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TO: Senate

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FROM Wade Parkhouse, Dean, Graduate Studies



RE GGR 1.3.12 English Language Competence [GS2012.03]

CC:

DATE 7 March 2012

At its meeting of March 5, 2012, the Senate Graduate Studies Committee approved and is recommending to Senate the revised GGR 1.3.12 English Language Competence [GS2012.03]

Motion:

That Senate approve the changes to GGR 1.3.12 English Language Competence.

Effective Date is September 2012

Senators wishing to consult a more detailed report of curriculum revisions may do so by going to Docushare: <https://docushare.sfu.ca/dsweb/View/Collection-12682>

If you are unable to access the information, please call [778-782-3168](tel:778-782-3168) or email shelley_gair@sfu.ca.

At its meeting of March 5, 2012, SGSC approved changes to GGR 1.3.12 to update our English Language Competence General Graduate Regulation and better align the admission standards between the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Specific Changes: English Language Competence GGG 1.3.12

- 1) The required TOEFL score for admission will be increased to an overall score of 93 (internet-based) and 580, Test of Written English (TWE) 5.0 (paper-based) to better align the test scores between IELTS and TOEFL. The previous TOEFL requirement was 88 (internet-based) and 570 (paper-based).
- 2) Establish band score of 6.5 for each test component of the IELTS test (listening, reading, writing, speaking).

Editorial and minor changes

- 3) Highlight that the IELTS (academic test) is the preferred test for admission but that we will accept other tests deemed to be equivalent provided the test scores required for admission are also equivalent.
- 4) Remove the TOEFL 230 (computer-based) test as it is no longer offered.
- 5) Remove the Pearson Test of English as no student has submitted a score for this test over the last three years.
- 6) Establish the length of time that a test score will be considered to be valid (2 years).
- 7) Establish guidelines for when the test can be waived and the process for requesting a waiver.
- 8) Editorial changes.

Rationale for the changes:

The IELTS (International English Language Testing Systems) has become the test of choice across many institutions for the appraisal of English language competence for admission to graduate schools/faculties and is the test most often cited in terms of our institutional standard. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) continues to be accepted by SFU and a large number of students continue to take this test for admission to SFU. Recently, an international partner made us aware that the minimum standard for admission on English language tests at SFU differed between IELTS and TOEFL such that the TOEFL requirement was considerably lower at the graduate level.

The Educational Testing Service website (www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/scores/compare) clearly indicates that an IELTS of 6.5 is equivalent to a TOEFL of 79-93 whereas an IELTS of 7.0 is equivalent to a TOEFL of 94-101. SFU Graduate Studies regulations currently requires an IELTS of 7.0 for admission whereas the TOEFL requirement is 88 with no section below 20 (reading, writing, speaking, listening).

Our undergraduate admission standard for IELTS is currently 6.5 with no section below 6.0. However, a 7.0 is required for writing intensive courses or alternatively completion of FAL.

SGSC has reviewed its admission standard for the IELTS and determined that the requirement of 7.0 should not be changed. This decision is based on the realization that writing is a significant component of all graduate programs and that the short time frame of some master's programs may limit a student's success should a lower standard be adopted.

A review of other institutions across the country demonstrated that the IELTS standard is either 6.5 or 7.0. For example; U of Toronto requires an IELTS of 7.0 and a TOEFL of 93 Internet Based Test (IBT) (22 on writing and speaking), Paper Based Test (PBT) 580, TWE 5. Furthermore, it was felt that our standard of an IELTS of 7.0 is not unreasonable given our limited institutional support for students whose first language is not English.

Based on this information, SGSC concluded that an IELTS of 7.0 was appropriate and that the TOEFL should be adjusted to 93 IBT and 580 PBT. This score is at the upper end of the 6.5 IELTS equivalency according to the Education Testing Service website and aligns with other institutions such as University of Toronto.

SGSC then reviewed our applicants' self-reported English Language Test scores over the past year and found that only 1.2% of all international applicants have a TOEFL ranging between 88-92. Last year only 18 students were offered admission with a TOEFL between 88 and 92 which is less than 1% of our total admission offers. Thus this change (TOEFL 93 IBT; 580 PBT) would have little impact on admission to our graduate programs.

The remaining changes were to clarify when a waiver may be considered and the process for requesting a waiver.

FROM:

(Existing Calendar Language)

GGR 1.3.12 English Language Competence

English is the language of instruction and communication in the University. Accordingly, an applicant whose primary language is not English or whose previous education has been conducted in another language must demonstrate command of English sufficient to pursue graduate studies in the chosen field.

Applicants normally will be required to achieve a satisfactory score on a standardized English test acceptable to the University. This test must include a writing component.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) including reading, writing, speaking, and listening components, is acceptable for this purpose. The IELTS (International English Language Testing Systems) is also acceptable. The minimum university requirements for test scores is TOEFL 88 with a minimum of 20 in each category (internet based exam), or TOEFL 570 and TWE 5 (paper based), or TOEFL 230 (computer based), and IELTS overall band score of 7.0.

On the Pearson Test of English (PTE), a minimum score of 62 overall and a minimum of 55 in any area is required.

Some graduate programs have higher requirements, as described elsewhere in this Calendar.

Further details about the above tests may be obtained from the following.

TOEFL and TWE – Education Testing Service, CN 6151, Princeton, NJ, 08541-6151 USA

Other acceptable English tests – Director, Graduate Records and Admissions

TO:

(New Calendar Language)

English is the language of instruction and communication at the University. Accordingly, an applicant whose primary language is not English must demonstrate command of English sufficient to pursue graduate studies in the chosen field. Applicants normally will be required to achieve a minimum score of 7.0 on the International English Language Test System (IELTS – the academic NOT the general test) with a minimum of 6.5 in any section. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) may be used as an equivalent test provided a score of 93 or better is achieved with a minimum of 20 in each section (TOEFL-internet based exam), or TOEFL 580 and the Test of Written English (TWE) 5.0 (paper-based). Any equivalent test must include a writing component and all test scores are valid for a period of two years from the date of the test. Some graduate programs have higher English Language Proficiency requirements as described elsewhere in this Calendar.

International applicants whose primary language is not English will not be required to complete an English-language test if they have completed a degree at an institution where the language of instruction and examination was in English in a country where English is the primary language.

An applicant requesting a waiver of the English language proficiency test should do so in writing and submit it with their application. The Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the department, will make determinations in these cases. It should be noted that in order to maintain a high academic standard, very few waivers are granted. Therefore, it is recommended that those applicants whose primary language is not English submit an English language proficiency test with their application.