S.24-105

SFU GRADUATE STUDIES

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate   **DATE** June 20, 2024

FROM Mary O'Brien,
Chair of Senate Graduate Studies Committee
(SGSC)

RE: Graduate General Regulation 1.3.3 English Language
Proficiency and 1.7.7c Laddering Credit

For Approval: At its meeting on June 4, 2024, SGSC reviewed and approved the revision Graduate General Regulations 1.3.3 English Language Proficiency and 1.7.7c Laddering Credit. This gives rise to the following motion, effective **Spring 2025**:

Motion 1:
That Senate approve the revisions to Graduate General Regulation 1.3.3 English Language Proficiency

Motion 2:
That Senate approve the revisions to Graduate General Regulation 1.7.7c Laddering Credit

Senators wishing to consult a more detailed report of curriculum revisions may do so on the Senate Docushare repository at https://docushare.sfu.ca/dsweb/View/Collection-12682
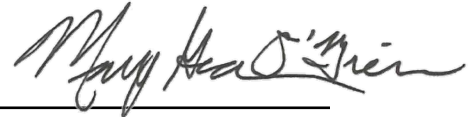
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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Mary O'Brien, Chair of Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)	**DATE**	June 4, 2024
FROM	Pamela Stern, Graduate Studies Associate Dean, Policy and Curriculum		
RE	Graduate General Regulation Revision: GGR 1.3.3		

Motion:

That SGSC approve the revisions of GGR 1.3.3 English Language Competence, effective Spring 2024.

Summary of Revisions:

SFU's English language proficiency (ELP) test score minima for IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English Qualifications and Duolingo are higher than those peer institutions. (See table 2 below.) We propose new ELP test score minima for these exams with the option for academic units to choose one of three options for test scores: the minimum scores, level 1 scores, or level 2 scores as outlined below. As has been the case until now, academic units that choose anything other than the full set of minimum scores must include this so that it can be included in the calendar.

Table 1: Proposed ELP test score levels

	Duolingo	IELTS (Academic only)	TOEFL iBT (including TOEFL iBT Home Edition)	Cambridge English Qualification	PTE	CAEL
minimum	125 (no subscore below 105*) (approved until 2026)	6.5 (min. 6.0 in each section)	90 (no subscore below 20)	180 (on C1 or C2 tests)	65 (no subscore below 60)	70 (no subscore below 60)
Level 1	130 (no subscore below 110)	7.0 (min. 6.5 in each section)	100	185	70	75
Level 2	135 (no subscore below 115)	7.5 (min. 7.0 in each section)	110	190	75	80

Background and Rationale:

As a result of Graduate Program Chairs sharing concerns around the high English language proficiency (ELP) test score requirements for applicants to SFU graduate credentials, Graduate Studies called for interested parties to

participate in an ELP working group. This group, which met three times during the Spring 2024 term, has representation from graduate programs and Faculties (Communications, FASS, Physics, Math, Earth Science), the Registrar's Office and Graduate Studies. A main concern shared by working group participants was that high-quality applicants with English as an additional language cannot be admitted to SFU as a result of the high ELP minimum test score requirements.

The group requests that the relationship between ELP test scores and success in program[1] be determined. Data from SFU students with IELTS or TOEFL exam scores were analyzed on a term-by-term basis between 2018 and 2023 for a total of 11,429 data points. The results indicate that there is no correlation between scores on the IELTS (table 3) and the TOEFL (table 4) and students' CGPA in their SFU graduate programs. This means that students with higher IELTS and TOEFL scores did not receive higher CGPAs

As a result of this work, the committee recommended the following:
1. That ELP test score minima be aligned with peer institutions.
2. That students must, without exception, have all ELP conditions cleared before they begin their programs. Although all admission conditions are to be met prior to students starting their first term of graduate work, some programs allow students to push their admission conditions to later terms. There are situations in which students are unable to meet the ELP requirements within the term when they are expected to do so. When these students are already in Canada, this causes a great deal of stress and hardship.
3. That solid supports be shared with English language learners who wish to develop their conversational English language skills and pedagogical skills.
   o Graduate Studies is working with the Research Commons to discuss options for greater participation in existing language supports (e.g., Conversation Partners Program, Talk and Connect consultations, Let's Talk English Conversation Group, Academic Writing for Graduate Students) available to graduate students.
   o Graduate Studies is working with units across SFU to discuss pedagogy courses / microcredentials to be made available to graduate students.

While GGRs will not be developed to align with recommendations 2 and 3, Graduate Studies has engaged in work that will advance both of these recommendations.

Next steps
Once approved, the scores will be effective in Spring 2025 and may be used for Fall 2025 admissions.

All academic units will be contacted about updating their minima for the Spring 2025 calendar. Programs that do not respond to the request for updated information will default to the new minima.

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[1] While measures such as time to completion may indicate success, current time to completion data are still affected by COVID-19. As a result, CGPA was the measure of success used in the current analyses.

Table 2: Comparison of English Language Proficiency Test Scores

Institution		Duolingo[1]	IELTS (Academic only)	TOEFL iBT (including TOEFL iBT Home Edition)	Paper-based TOEFL[2]	Cambridge English Qualification	PTE	CAEL
SFU	Graduate	130 (min. of 120 in each section) (approved until 2026)	7.0 (min. 6.5 in each section)	93 (no subscore below 20)	580 (and TWE 5)	193 (on C1 Advanced test) 200 (on C2 Proficiency test)	65 (so subscore below 60)	70 (no subscore below 60)
	Undergraduate	125	6.5 (min. 6.0 in each section) (IELTS One-skill Retake not allowed)	88 overall (no subscore below 20)		176 overall (no subscore below 169)	65 (no subscore below 60)	70 (no subscore below 60)
UBC	Graduate	NA	6.5 (min. 6.0 on each section)	90 (22 min. for reading and listening; 21 min. for listening and speaking)	Min. 55 for reading, listening and speaking and Test of Written English 4	NA	65 (no subscore below 60)	70 (60 required on speaking subtest)
	Undergraduate	125	6.5 (min. 6.0 in each section)	90 (22 min. for reading and listening; 21 min. for listening and speaking)	NA	180	65 (no subscore below 60)	70
UVic	Graduate	NA	6.5 (min. 6.0 on each section)	90 (no subscore below 20)	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Undergraduate	NA	6.5 (min. 6.0 on each section)	90 (no subscore below 20)	NA	NA	NA	70 (min. 60 on each subscore)
University of Alberta	Graduate	120 (no subscore below 100) 140 in some programs (with no subscore below 120)	6.5 (min 6.0 on each section)	90 (no subscore below 21)	NA	NA	61 (no subscore below 60)	70 (min. 60 on each subscore)

		(until 2028)						
	Undergraduate	120 (no subscore below 100)	6.5 (min 6.0 on each section)	90 (no subscore below 21)	NA	180 (no subscore below 170)	61 (no subscore below 60)	70 (min. 60 on each subscore)
University of Toronto	Graduate	NA	7.0 (min 6.5 on each section)	93 (with writing and speaking not below 22)	580 (and TWE 4-5)	185 (no subscore below 176)	NA	70 (min. 60 on each subscore)
	Undergraduate	120 (no subscore below 100)	6.5 (min 6.0 on each section)	89 (with min. 22 in speaking and writing)		180 (no subscore below 170)	65 (no subscore below 60)	70 (min. 60 on each subscore)
Concordia	Graduate	NA	6.5-7.0, depending on program	85-95, depending on program (min. 20 in each section)	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Undergraduate[3]	120 (no subscore below 90)	7.0	90 (combined min. of 34 for speaking and writing)	NA	190 (no subscore below 165)	61 (with min. of 46 in speaking and writing)	70 (min. 50 on each subscore)
	Graduate minimum (e.g., Sociology, History, Kinesiology)	125 (no subscore below 105)	6.5 (min 6.0 in each section)	86 (min 20 in each section)	NA	180 on C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency exam	59	70 (min 60 in each section)
University of Calgary	Graduate level 1 (e.g., Education, English, Social Work, Law, Math, Chemistry, Computer Science)	130 (no subscore below 110)	7.0	97	NA	185 on C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency Exam (approximate score)	68	70 (70 in some sections – up to the program, 60 in all other)

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[3] Concordia has two levels of test scores for undergraduate students. Students who achieve a higher level (listed above) are not required to take ESL courses. Those who achieve a lower level must take an English course.

	Graduate level 2 (e.g., Political Science, Medicine)	135 (no subscore below 115)	7.5	105	NA	191 on C2 Proficiency Exam (approximate score)	75	70 (70 in each section)
	Undergraduate (with higher scores in Education, Nursing, Medicine and some others)	120	6.5	86	560	180	60	70 (except Education and Nursing)

Table 3: CGPA-IELTS score (total and subskill) correlations

	CGPA	Overall IELTS	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Reading
CGPA	1					
Overall IELTS	0.08	1				
Listening	0.03	0.76	1			
Writing	-0.04	0.62	0.41	1		
Speaking	0.03	0.61	0.33	0.42	1	
Reading	0.09	0.67	0.48	0.31	0.23	1

Table 4: CGPA-TOEFL score (total and subskill) correlations

	CGPA	Overall TOEFL	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Reading
CGPA	1					
Overall TOEFL	0.15	1				
Listening	0.10	0.76	1			
Writing	0.10	0.72	0.33	1		
Speaking	0.10	0.68	0.37	0.40	1	
Reading	0.13	0.71	0.47	0.35	0.22	1

General Graduate Regulations Change 1.3.3 English Language Competence

Summary of change:
SFU's English language proficiency (ELP) test score minima for IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English Qualifications and Duolingo are higher than those peer institutions. (See table 2 below.) We propose new ELP test score minima for these exams with the option for academic units to choose one of three options for test scores: the minimum scores, level 1 scores, or level 2 scores as outlined below. As has been the case until now, academic units that choose anything other than the full set of minimum scores must include this so that it can be included in the calendar.

Rationale for change:

As a result of Graduate Program Chairs sharing concerns around the high English language proficiency (ELP) test score requirements for applicants to SFU graduate credentials, Graduate Studies called for interested parties to participate in an ELP working group. This group, which met three times during the Spring 2024 term, has representation from graduate programs and Faculties (Communications, FASS, Physics, Math, Earth Science), the Registrar's Office and Graduate Studies. A main concern shared by working group participants was that high-quality applicants with English as an additional language cannot be admitted to SFU as a result of the high ELP minimum test score requirements.

The group requests that the relationship between ELP test scores and success in program[1] be determined. Data from SFU students with IELTS or TOEFL exam scores were analyzed on a term-by-term basis between 2018 and 2023 for a total of 11,429 data points. The results indicate that there is no correlation between scores on the IELTS (table 3) and the TOEFL (table 4) and students' CGPA in their SFU graduate programs. This means that students with higher IELTS and TOEFL scores did not receive higher CGPAs

As a result of this work, the committee recommended the following:
1. That ELP test score minima be aligned with peer institutions.
2. That students must, without exception, have all ELP conditions cleared before they begin their programs. Although all admission conditions are to be met prior to students starting their first term of graduate work, some programs allow students to push their admission conditions to later terms. There are situations in which students are unable to meet the ELP requirements within the term when they are expected to do so. When these students are already in Canada, this causes a great deal of stress and hardship.
3. That solid supports be in place for English language learners to develop their academic language proficiency, conversational English language skills, and pedagogical skills.
   o Graduate Studies is working with the Research Commons and others to discuss a suite of language and pedagogy courses / microcredentials to be made available to graduate students.
   o Graduate Studies is also working with the Research Commons to determine whether additional conversation supports might be available to graduate students.

While GGRs will not be developed to align with recommendations 2 and 3, Graduate Studies has engaged in work that will advance both of these recommendations.

[1] While measures such as time to completion may indicate success, current time to completion data are still affected by COVID-19. As a result, CGPA was the measure of success used in the current analyses.
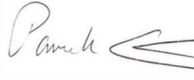
Effective term and year: Spring 2025

Will this change impact current students? If yes, what is the plan for current students?
No.

FROM	TO
## 1.3.3 English Language Competence […] All other international applicants will be required to achieve a minimum score on one of the following: - International English Language Test System (IELTS Academic, not the general test) ~~7.0~~ overall with a minimum of ~~6.5~~ in each section - Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) ~~93~~ or better is achieved with a minimum of 20 in each section - Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL) overall 70, with a minimum of 60 in each section - Pearson Test of English – Academic (PTE) 65 overall score, with a minimum of 60 in each section - Cambridge English Qualifications: C1 Advanced with a minimum score of	## 1.3.3 English Language Competence […] All other international applicants will be required to achieve a minimum score on one of the following: - International English Language Test System (IELTS Academic, not the general test) **6.5** overall with a minimum of **6.0** in each section - Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) **90** or better is achieved with a minimum of 20 in each section - Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL) overall 70, with a minimum of 60 in each section - Pearson Test of English – Academic (PTE) 65 overall score, with a minimum of 60 in each section - Cambridge English Qualifications: C1 Advanced **or C2 Proficiency** with a minimum score of **180**

~~193, or C2 Proficiency with a minimum score of 200~~ • Provisionally through the Fall 2026 admission cycle: Duolingo English Test (DET) ~~130~~ overall with a minimum of ~~120~~ in each section.	• Provisionally through the Fall 2026 admission cycle: Duolingo English Test (DET) **125** overall with a minimum of **105** in each section.

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MEMORANDUM ————————————————————————————————

ATTENTION	Mary O'Brien, Chair of Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)	**DATE**	May 28, 2024
FROM	Pamela Stern, Graduate Studies Associate Dean, Curriculum and Policy		
RE:	New Graduate General Regulation: GGR 1.7.7c Laddering Credit		

Motion:

That SGSC approve the addition of GGR 1.7.7c Laddering Credit effective Spring 2025.

Summary and Rationale:

The current Graduate General Regulations define Transfer Credit (GGR 1.7.7a) and Advanced Credit (GGR 1.7.7b). Under each option, there are specific conditions for when the credit is eligible to be applied to a graduate credential. The two existing types of credit no longer meet the needs of graduate education; a landscape analysis and review of institutions offering graduate programs across Canada shows that more institutions are offering an alternative type of credit that supports different pathways and access to graduate studies. Additionally, within SFU, graduate programs are asking for greater flexibility, accessibility, and options for their students, which will also create an opportunity to recruit students who might not otherwise be able to consider graduate educational options.

There are different names for these options, but laddering and stacking are two common terms when referring to these sorts of pathways that allow students to eventually earn a Master's credential by applying credits completed in an earlier credential or through combining credentials in a recognized way.

Recommendations:

To align with the evolving practice across other Canadian institutions and to better serve our graduate programs, develop a new type of credit, laddering credit, and definition for laddered pathways.

Other Canadian Institutions with Laddering Policies:

Institution	Policy for Laddering Credit/Pathway?	Currently Offers Approved or Existing Laddered Pathways at a Graduate Level	Link to Policy
U of T	No univerisity-wide policy found	N/A	N/A
UVIC	Yes - Refer to AC1135, POLICY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MICRO-CERTIFICATE, CERTIFICATE AND DIPLOMA PROGRAMS	Yes	https://www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/ac1135.pdf
UBC	Yes. Refer to Senate Policy V-128 (not found in academic calendar).	Yes	https://senate.ubc.ca/files/va_V_128_Academic_Credit_Certificate_Programs_20230215-1.pdf#:~:text=Laddering%20shall%20mean%20the%20application,in%20a%20Course%20of%20Study.
UCalgary	Yes	Yes	https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/archives/2023/gs-a-7.html
UAlberta	Yes	Yes	https://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=13568#laddering
Queens	Yes	Yes	https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/certificate-and-diploma-programs#credit

GGR 1.7.7c Laddering Credit

A student may have completed courses as part of a previous credential that are eligible to be applied to their current credential. Two types of approved laddered pathways are recognized: internal laddered pathways and approved external laddering credit pathways.

Internal laddered pathways:

An internal laddered pathway allows for students who have completed an approved SFU graduate certificate or diploma to progress into a subsequent diploma or master's program and carry forward the credits from their previously completed credential. As the courses and their unit-values are already reflected on the transcript, no additional credit is awarded; however, students receive recognition for each completed credential including a separate parchment. Please refer to the list of current recognized laddered pathways at SFU.

In the case of unrecognized laddered pathways, individual students who have completed an SFU certificate or diploma may apply to have those credits recognized as laddering. Approval must be provided by the Dean and Vice-Provost of Graduate Studies.

External laddering credit:

A student may be eligible to receive credit for courses completed as part of a credential at an institution outside SFU under the following conditions:

a) A partnership agreement, transfer pathway, or memorandum of understanding has been formally established and approved by the appropriate SFU approval body.

b) The courses must have been completed within three years of starting the Simon Fraser University graduate credential.

c) The minimum grade required must be equivalent to a B, although the grade achieved will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative grade point average. Cases where the grading basis is pass/fail or equivalent will be considered but must be approved in advance as part of the partnership agreement, transfer pathway or memorandum of understanding by the appropriate office(s).

d) Application for laddering credit must be approved by the graduate program committee and the Dean and Vice-Provost of graduate studies, before admission.

Recognized Laddered Pathways at SFU:

- GDBA to MBA programs
- Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE) to MEd EP
- Mitacs Skills Training to i2I (Graduate Certificate in Science and Technology Commercialization) 3-year pilot