

UC SAN DIEGO GRADUATE DIVISION POLICY ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

International graduate students proposed as teaching assistants for the first time (regardless of year in progress), whose native language is not English, whose undergraduate degree is not from an English-speaking college or university, or who have serious pronunciation problems, may not serve as TAs until they have been certified to have the requisite English language skills. This English language policy does not apply to students who serve as language assistants in courses conducted in their native language.

LANGUAGE TESTING

A student's language competency may be assessed on the basis of an oral screening conducted prior to the start of classes (in unusual circumstances, no later than the **first** week of classes) by a committee. The test periods are the month of September, and then Finals Week and the week after Finals in Fall, Winter and Spring quarters. The committee will be comprised of at least one faculty representative from the hiring department and a trained linguist appointed by the Center for Engaged Teaching. Each member of the committee contributes to the determination whether a student meets the minimum level of proficiency necessary for a TAship in the department. The minimum level of proficiency can be defined as the student's ability to respond and interact appropriately to questions of a discipline-specific nature with proficient vocabulary and comprehensible pronunciation given a 15-minute interview. (See attachment #1 for details on English Language Screening Guidelines.) Approval to employ a different method of certification may be sought from the Dean of the Graduate Division. Information about various means of assessing teaching-related language skills can be obtained from the English Language Program for International Instructors (ELP-ii, elpii@ucsd.edu).

CERTIFICATION

A student may receive unconditional ("pass") or conditional ("provisional pass") certification. The former indicates that the student has adequate language skills to serve as a TA without further language training. Conditional certification indicates that the student has nearly adequate language skills to serve as a TA, but must enroll in an appropriate language training course before or during the first quarter in which he or she serves as a TA. Furthermore, a student receiving provisional certification must be re-evaluated prior to serving as a TA for a second quarter and may not serve as a TA for a third quarter unless he or she receives unconditional certification by then. If a student does not receive unconditional certification to serve as a TA for the third quarter, the department must continue to honor its financial commitment to the student or may, with approval from the Dean of the Graduate Division, develop a formal policy outlining alternative department action. A student who does not receive either conditional or unconditional certification must enroll in a language training course prior to being tested again and must be certified before he or she may serve as a TA.

LANGUAGE COURSES

A student with a TA requirement who receives conditional certification or who fails to be certified may enroll at no cost no later than the second week of classes in the ELP-ii offered by the Center for Engaged Teaching. Alternatively, a student may enroll in an English as a Second Language course offered by University Extension, a community college, or other institution. Funding for such language training must be provided by the student's department.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

If the department awards a TAship to an incoming international student who fails to be certified, the department must honor its financial commitment to that student even though he or she will not be allowed to serve as a TA. It would be advisable, therefore, for departments that expect incoming international students to serve as TAs in their first quarter either to have these students certified prior to awarding TAships to them or to make the TAship award conditional upon being certified. Achieving a TOEFL iBT Speaking score of 28-30, an IELTS Speaking score of 8.5-9.0, or a PTE Speaking score of 83-90 is an acceptable method of pre-certification in the student's home country; other proposed methods of pre-certification should be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate Division for approval. Students who do not pass the pre-certification screening are still eligible to be screened upon arrival at UC San Diego by the method described above.

COMPLIANCE

To ensure a rewarding teaching experience for both the TA and undergraduates, students who are awarded TAships without certification are subject to having their stipend withheld by the Graduate Division until the students are certified as having the requisite English language skills for teaching.