

**Assessing the Spoken English Competency
of Prospective GTAs who are Non-native Speakers of English**

**University of Kansas, Lawrence
October 24, 2012**

The Board of Regents policy on spoken English competency requires that non-native speakers of English appointed to GTA positions demonstrate English proficiency on one of the following tests of English competency: the Test of Spoken English (TSE)*, the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK), the Speaking portion of the Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) or the speaking portion of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The minimum score that must be obtained appears in the table below, separately by test. In addition, all non-native speakers of English must be interviewed by three institutional representatives, including at least one student. The interview allows the representatives to determine whether the candidate GTA possesses sufficient English proficiency.

Evaluation of English language competency before extending offer of GTA appointment:

1. Spoken English competency as measured by:

| Test | Min. Score |
|------------|------------|
| TSE, SPEAK | 50 |
| iBT | 22 |
| IELTS | 8 |

2. Interview with three institutional representatives, including one student

*Note: Educational Testing Services is responsible for both the TSE and the iBT and is phasing out the TSE in countries where the iBT is offered.

Background:

The Board of Regents has set a minimum score of 50 on the TSE or the SPEAK test. Board of Regents policy authorizes the University of Kansas to establish minimum scores for equivalent exams. The University of Kansas has adopted an iBT spoken English score of 22 and an IELTS spoken English score of 8 as the minimum scores required for GTA appointments for non-native speakers of English.

Board policy also requires that prospective GTAs be interviewed by at least three institutional representatives, at least one of whom must be a student; the policy also permits state universities to adopt standards that exceed or are additional to those contained in its policy.

Procedure:

The University is gathering data about the comparability of the iBT and IELTS test scores. When non-native speakers of English who have been offered GTA positions on the basis of iBT or IELTS scores arrive on campus, the Applied English Center (AEC) will administer the SPEAK test to them. A graduate student who has been offered a GTA position on the basis of a minimum score on the iBT or IELTS will not forfeit the GTA position if he or she does not score 50 on the SPEAK test. However, the AEC may recommend that the student take specific AEC courses to help overcome any deficiencies. Incoming graduate students who scored less than 22 on the spoken component of the iBT or 8 on the spoken component of the IELTS also are encouraged to take the SPEAK test.