

**Motion to Modify the TOEFL Requirements for the
Admission of International Undergraduates**

October 8, 2015

The Academic Affairs Committee moves the adoption by the University of Missouri Faculty Council of the following:

International first-time college students and transfer students shall meet one of the following in order to demonstrate English proficiency for direct degree program admission eligibility:

- Minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet-based test (iBT) score of 79 with no part score below 18 (or corresponding paper-based test scores).
- Minimum (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) overall band score of 6.5 with no band score below 6.0.
- Completion of British General Certificate of Education (GCSE) or International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) English exam with a score of B or higher or completion of International Baccalaureate (IB) higher-level English A with a score of 5 or higher.
- Successful completion of three years of fulltime coursework at MU-approved international high schools where all instruction and programming is conducted in English. (Such high schools would be vetted by an on-site visit and approved by both MU International Admissions and faculty of the University of Missouri Center for English Language Learning [CELL].)

Applicants whose academic credential meet admission requirements, but who have TOEFL iBT scores of 61-78 with no part scores below 15, shall be offered an alternative admission subject that requires participation in a formal English language support program. This support program would allow students to enroll in a “limited set of regular academic courses” while simultaneously enrolling in one or more English language support courses. When students’ English skills meet regular admission standards, they would move into full-time academic coursework. Applicants with TOEFL scores below 61 or with sub scores below 15 shall be admitted to the Intensive English Program (IEP) where they would take only English coursework.

The “limited set of regular academic courses” shall be proposed by the Provost’s Office and considered, amended, and approved (or rejected) by the Faculty Council at a time subsequent to the approval of the current motion.

The “alternative admission” support program for students with TOEFL scores of 61-78 shall be reviewed by Faculty Council three years and six years after the introduction of this program.

Committee Comments on the Motion:

- (1) As is currently the case, individual colleges within MU may require TOEFL scores higher than the university minimum (e.g., the School of Journalism currently requires a score of 100).
- (2) The proposed changes will provide greater transparency for international students and more appropriate expectations of what their programs of study will be upon arrival at MU.
- (3) The proposed changes are not expected to adversely affect student body diversity. Raising the TOEFL requirement without adopting the support or “bridge” programs for students in the 61-78 range would adversely affect diversity.

What follows is the proposal that the Provost’s Office, International Admissions, and the MU Center for English Language Learning provided the committee.

English Language Proficiency Standards for International Undergraduate Admission

Proposal

The Office of International Admissions proposes that the University of Missouri revise admission standards related to English language proficiency. Proposed minimums are listed below; additional or elevated score requirements remain the purview of respective academic units.

All international first-time college students must first meet admissions requirements, based upon curriculum, grades, and frequently an SAT or ACT score. These requirements would not change. We propose that students meet one of the following in order to demonstrate English proficiency for direct degree program admission eligibility:

- Minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet-based test (iBT) score of 79 with no part score below 18 (or corresponding paper-based test scores).
- Minimum (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) overall band score of 6.5 with no band score below 6.0.
- Completion of British General Certificate of Education (GCSE) or International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) English exam with a score of B or higher or completion of International Baccalaureate (IB) higher-level English A with a score of 5 or higher.¹
- Successful completion of three years of fulltime coursework at MU-approved international high schools where all instruction and programming is conducted in English.²

Applicants whose academic credential meet admission requirements, but who have TOEFL iBT scores of 61-78 with no part scores below 15, will be offered an alternative admission subject that requires participation in a formal English language support program.³ This support program would allow students to enroll in a limited set of regular academic courses while simultaneously enrolling in one or more English language support courses. When students' English skills meet regular admission standards, they would move into full-time academic coursework. Applicants with TOEFL scores below 61 or with sub scores below 15 would be admitted to the Intensive English Program (IEP) where they would take only English coursework.

Background

In July of 2013 International Admissions and leadership in the Intensive English Program (IEP) and English Language Support Program (ELSP), in consultation with Faculty Council, Graduate Faculty Senate

¹ Each of these credentials represent curriculum that has been reviewed by MU Faculty and deemed worthy of credit at the University. We award this credit to students from English-speaking countries and, as the curriculum does not change across borders, we feel that it should also serve as proof of English proficiency.

² Approval granted by both International Admissions and faculty of the University of Missouri Center for English Language Learning. This would be limited to schools that have been vetted on-site by International Admissions or CELL representatives.

³ Alternatively, they could have corresponding scores from approved English language assessments as determined in cooperation with the MU Center for English Language Learning.

and leadership from the International Center, began a review of the university’s English language proficiency standards for admission. This review was undertaken in response to questions posed by both Faculty Council and the Graduate Faculty Senate. Both bodies were interested in raising the TOEFL requirement for admission. The subsequent review and discussion considered the following:

- The University of Missouri’s admission standards as compared to peer and AAU universities
- The academic performance of students, correlated with their TOEFL scores
- Potential impact upon the numbers of applications and admitted students caused by raising the English proficiency requirement
- Impending creation of the Center for English Language Learning (CELL) and expansion of the ELSP

Both the Faculty Council and the Graduate Faculty Senate agreed to table the topic for one year. This was done in consideration of changes in university leadership that were to take place. Specifically, postponing a decision would allow input from the then vacant director of the CELL, and from the Provost and Provost Staff. The appointment of the CELL Director during the fall 2014 semester prompted reconsideration of this topic.

Current Language Proficiency Standards

The minimum TOEFL and IELTS scores required for admission to the university are the lowest among our AAU peers (**Appendix A**), other SEC universities, and, as well, those in the Big 10. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Office of International Admissions partnered with Institutional Research to examine our admission criteria for non-native English speaking international applicants. This examination indicated that University of Missouri degree program admission requirements vary by school or college:

Undergraduate Academic Division	Minimum total TOEFL score		Minimum IELTS score	
	Paper-based	Internet-based	Overall	No band below
College of Arts and Science	500	61	6.5	6.0
College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	500	61	6.5	6.0
College of Business and Public Administration	550	79	6.5	6.0
College of Education	600	100	7.0	6.5
College of Engineering	500	61	6.5	6.0
School of Health Professions	600	100	7.0	6.5
College of Human Environmental Sciences	500	61	6.5	6.0
School of Journalism	600	100	7.0	6.5
School of Natural Resources	500	61	6.5	6.0
School of Nursing	600	100	7.0	6.5

Current Practices of Intensive English Program (IEP) and proposed changes:

Currently, IEP students are enrolled by the IEP, which also manages their schedules. Students have the same privileges as MU students but fall outside standard procedures for enrollment. The director (new in fall 2014) of the MU Center for English Language Learning has undertaken a systematic review of policies in order to develop the Center as a pipeline into MU degree programs for international students. Prior to his incumbency there was a disconnect between International Admissions and the IEP program, with very few students matriculating at Mizzou upon completion of the IEP program. Currently, the director is working with the Offices of International Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions and the University Registrar to develop and implement plans to enroll students through standard MU procedures. This will allow for tracking students' progress through the IEP and MU, and will provide data that will help with planning and decision making.

All non-native English speaking first-time college (FTC) students are required to take the English Language Exam (ELE) upon arrival at Mizzou in August. Many of the students who have TOEFL scores between 61 and 78 are told upon completion of the exam that they must enroll in 1 or 2 ELSP courses and limit their regular credit-bearing coursework for at least the first semester. While information about the ELE and ELSP are included in the Admissions website and the International Center website, we believe that the proposed change would create a more transparent approach. We would inform students in advance, based on their TOEFL exam, that they have been given alternative admission to Mizzou, but that they will have to successfully complete the to-be-named "bridge" program prior to commencing full-time unrestricted coursework. An important added benefit will be that CELL will be better able to predict how many language instructors are needed, rather than not knowing until after students arrive in August and take the language exam.

It is important to note that based on the chart below, Mizzou would stand to lose a significant portion of their undergraduate international students if we simply raise the TOEFL requirement without implementing a structured bridge program. In light of the Chancellor and Provost indicating a desire for further internationalization of the campus, it is critical that we take action to at least maintain our current levels of undergraduate international enrollment.

Fall 2014			
Enrolled students 79 and higher	62	Enrolled students 61-78*	110

Fall 2013			
Enrolled students 79 and higher	75	Enrolled students 61-78*	87

* Students not admissible below 61 IBT TOEFL

The proposed changes will allow the University to continue to attract and teach students whose demonstrated English language proficiency scores fall within the ranges from which we currently draw applicants and enrollees. This not only maintains our niche market, but formalizes current practices with a student-centric curriculum. Again, the proposed changes do not change what we are doing so much as it makes our policies and practices more transparent. Further, the proposed structure

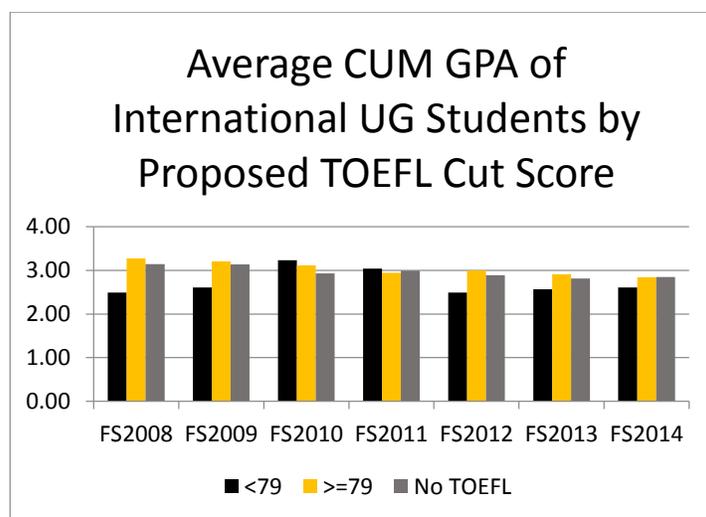
addresses concerns raised by Faculty Council in regard to the necessary increase of standards for English language competencies within our non-native English speaking international student population.

Academic Performance of Current Students

The following table shows average GPA values related to TOEFL scores. Providing a formalized admission and “bridge” curriculum program for students who need additional language development is essential for maintaining international student saturation on campus and sponsored program levels, and for any international growth. Expansion of our English language support program will support students with TOEFL scores of 61-78, providing entry to the university, while also allowing for and supporting a degree-program admission standard of 79 or higher. **(Appendix B)**

NOTE: Students in the category of “No TOEFL” below are those for whom English is the primary language, or they were exempted based on their ACT or SAT scores in conjunction with having studied secondary school in an English speaking country.

	< 79	>= 79	No TOEFL	Overall
FS2008	2.48	3.28	3.14	2.96
FS2009	2.59	3.21	3.13	3.04
FS2010	3.23	3.13	2.89	3.06
FS2011	2.96	2.97	2.94	2.96
FS2012	2.51	3.02	2.94	2.80



Revenue and Resources

The Center for English Language Learning (CELL) subsumes both the IEP (Intensive English Program) and the ELSP (English Language Support Program), and is a self-supporting unit. Income meets expenses and provides a surplus which funds capital improvements and development projects. An increase in international student enrollment at MU will not place a financial burden on the University. The Center is

working with the Office of the University Registrar and Space Planning and Management to procure additional classroom and office space, for which CELL will pay the University. CELL has the resources to manage the inevitable fluctuation of enrollments during a transitional phase which includes not only an increase in TOEFL scores, but a general expansion of the IEP and ELSP programs to accommodate more students.

There will be no loss of students passing through ENGL 1000. In the first year of implementation there is likely to be a slight downturn in ENGL 1000 enrollment (International Student sections) as the first expanded cohort spends time in CELL courses before moving to ENGLISH 1000.

Conclusion

Raising our TOEFL requirements will put us more in line with similar large public research institutions and will raise perceptions of our academic profile among international students. While those students with a 79 or higher TOEFL performed at a higher level than those in the lower range, it's important to note that both groups were successful at MU and the retention rate of international students overall is actually higher than the retention rate of our domestic population. We do not want to risk losing the larger percentage of students we have traditionally admitted in the lower TOEFL ranges. Instead, we need to provide them a bridge program that provides additional language development so that they will be even more successful in their academic coursework at Mizzou.

Appendix A

Association of American Universities						
SCHOOL NAME	TOEFL BAND	TOEFL WRITING	TOEFL SPEAKING	TOEFL READING	TOEFL LISTENING	IELTS COMPOSITE
Boston University		22	23	21	18	7
College of Communication		22	23	25	21	7
Brandeis University	100					7
Brown University	90					7
California Institute of Technology						n/a
Carnegie Mellon University	100					
Case Western Reserve University	90					7
Columbia University	100					
Cornell University	100					7
Duke University	100					7
Emory University	80					7
Georgia Institute of Technology	79					
Harvard University	109					7
Indiana University	79					6.5
Iowa State University	71					5.5
The John Hopkins University	100	22	25	26	26	7
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	90					7
McGill University	92					
Michigan State University	79					6.5
New York University	100					7
Northwestern University	111					
The Ohio State University	79					7
The Pennsylvania State University	80					6.5
Princeton University	107	26	24	29	28	8
Purdue University	79					6.5
Rice University	100					7
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	79					6.5
Stanford University	100					n/a
Stony Brook University-State University of New York	80					6.5
Texas A&M University	80					6
Tulane University	100					6.5
The University of Arizona	61					5.5
University at Buffalo	79					6
University of California, Berkeley	80					7

Association of American Universities						
SCHOOL NAME	TOEFL BAND	TOEFL WRITING	TOEFL SPEAKING	TOEFL READING	TOEFL LISTENING	IELTS COMPOSITE
University of California, Davis	80					7
University of California, Irvine	80					7
University of California, Los Angeles	87					7
University of California, San Diego	90					7
University of California, Santa Barbara	80					7
The University of Chicago	90					7
University of Colorado-Boulder	83					6.5
University of Florida	80					6
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	80					6.5
The University of Iowa	80					6.5
The University of Kansas	92					6.5
University of Maryland, College Park	100	26	22	26	26	6.5
University of Michigan	100					7
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	79					6.5
University of Missouri-Columbia	61	15	15	15	15	6.5
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	100					7
University of Oregon	88					7
University of Pennsylvania	100					
University of Pittsburgh	80					6.5
University of Rochester	100	25	24	26	25	
University of Southern California	100					
The University of Texas at Austin	80					6.5
University of Toronto	89					6.5
University of Virginia	90	22	22	23	23	7
University of Washington	76					6
The University of Wisconsin-Madison	95					6.5
Vanderbilt University	100					6.5
Washington University in St. Louis	90					7
Yale University	100					7

Appendix B

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed by a Council of Europe Language Policy Division “with a view to promoting transparency and coherence in the learning and teaching of modern languages in Europe.” (<https://delfdalf.ch/index.php?id=177&L=1>) It was published in 2001. Because of the use of band descriptors which transcend any language, and due to its broad reference globally by language teaching professionals, major published standardized exams have done the research necessary to correlate their scores to the CEFR bands.

The chart below amalgamates descriptors and scores from several reliable sources, and while there is quite a bit of consistency, there are discrepancies in some score concordances. The descriptor column is taken from the CEFR site. The number sources come from IELTS, ETS (publisher of TOEFL) and the British Council. This chart is not meant as a definitive description of scores and language proficiency, but rather is intended as an educational document to help non-language-teaching educators understand TOEFL and IELTS scores in terms of demonstrated language ability.

CEFR Band	Band Descriptor	IELTS	TOEFL	TOEFL Exam Part Scores			
				Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
C1+	<p>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</p> <p><u>TOEFL 119-110; IELTS 7.5-7.0</u></p> <p>High C1: feel fully comfortable in the language; be creative in the language and develop a personal style; put across complex points of view in meetings, seminars, reports, presentations</p> <p>Low C1: Intervene in a discussion appropriately; develop ideas systematically; emphasize specific points in meetings, seminars, reports, presentations</p>	7.5-6.5	120-95	30-24	30-22	30-25	30-24
		7.0 6.5	102-94 93-79	IELTS/TOEFL 8/28 7.5/26 7.0/24	IELTS/TOEFL 8.0/26 7.5/24 7.0/22	IELTS/TOEFL 8.0/28 7.5/27 7.0/25	IELTS/TOEFL 8.0/28 7.5/26 7.0/24
B2	<p>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p>	6.0-5.0	94-72	23-18	21-17	24-20	23-17

Band Score	Descriptors			
	Academic Courses		Training Courses	
	Linguistically demanding academic courses; e.g., medicine, law, linguistics, journalism, library studies	Linguistically less demanding academic courses; e.g., agriculture, pure mathematics, technology, computer based work, telecommunications	Linguistically demanding training courses; e.g., air traffic control, engineering, pure/applied sciences, industrial safety	Linguistically less demanding training courses; e.g., animal husbandry, catering, fire services
9.0-7.5	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
7.0	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.5	English study needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.0	English study needed	English study needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable
5.5	English study needed	English study needed	English study needed	Probably Acceptable

IELTS Band	Descriptor
8: very good user	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasionally unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstanding may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detail argumentation well.
Band 7: Good user	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
Band 6: Competent user	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
Band 5: Modest User	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
Band 4: Limited User	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.