



# Frequently Asked Questions: English Proficiency Testing for Graduate Students

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**For answers, read on!**

### **1. What is the format of the tests?**

Descriptions of the tests are available at <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~esl/assessment.shtml>.

### **2. Where and when are the English proficiency exams offered?**

The exams are offered on many dates and times from August 3-23, 2011. The dates, times, and locations are found on the online signup forms at <http://oisshome.wustl.edu/elp/> and on the ELP web site at <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~esl/falltest.shtml>. In order for the ELP to communicate exam results to schools/departments, handle questions about the results in a timely manner, and finalize preparations for the courses we teach in the fall semester, no exams are offered after Tuesday, August 23.

### **3. I think I should be exempted from the English proficiency exams because [XYZ]. Am I really required to take the exams?**

The decision about who must take the exams is made by your school/department. If your school or department has required you to take any of the English proficiency exams, a letter notifying you about this requirement is sent to you by the Office for International Students and Scholars at the time your visa documents are issued. If you think that you should be exempted, contact your school/department and the ELP at [esl@artsci.wustl.edu](mailto:esl@artsci.wustl.edu) as soon as possible after you are notified about the exam requirement. Please note: Having taken the TOEFL or another standardized English proficiency test does not exempt you from taking Washington University's English proficiency exams.

### **4. How should I prepare for the exams?**

The best way to prepare is to keep your skills sharp by spending time reading, writing, hearing, and speaking English on a regular basis before your arrival (especially in topics related to your field of study). No commercially prepared materials are available to prepare for the ELP's exams.

### **5. I have a conflict with the exam time I originally chose. Can I reschedule the exam?**

Due to the large number of students who must take the exams in August and the limited number of staff to administer the exams, only students who show documentation that they missed their exam time due to an illness, emergency, or visa/travel issue may reschedule. Keep in mind that not all orientation events may be required by your school/department—however, the English proficiency exams about which you have been notified are required by your school/department.

### **6. How/When can I find out the result of the exam(s)?**

Results of the exams are made available to most students in two ways:

- 1) Results are posted to the "Scores" section of a student's internal record in SIS/WebSTAC. Under Scores, look for "WU Graduate Composition Exam Placement" and/or "WU Graduate

Speaking Exam Placement.” To interpret the code that you find there, see the list of ELP exam codes at <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~esl/scores.shtml>. Students are encouraged to look up their scores themselves. Scores are normally posted two to three working days after the exam.

Exception: Graduate students in Engineering and Social Work will see different codes. For more information, see your department at the end of the week before classes start.

2) Results for students in each department are e-mailed to department contacts on Thursday or Friday of the week before classes start.

### **7. Am I required to take the ELP course(s) recommended for me?**

Some WUSTL schools/departments require students to take recommended ELP coursework, and other WUSTL schools/departments do not require this. Please check with your school/department to find out whether any requirement applies to you.

### **8. An ELP course that was recommended for me conflicts with my schedule. What should I do?**

First, speak with your advisor to see if there is any room for flexibility in your schedule and to get your advisor’s opinion about how to resolve the schedule conflict. Then, if you and your advisor find that it is not possible to take the recommended ELP course right away, contact the ELP to see if an equivalent ELP course can be recommended as an alternative. Please keep in mind that all ELP courses are somewhat different and, due to the small class sizes, most ELP courses have only one section. If you have a conflict with a recommended ELP course and no equivalent ELP course is offered that semester, it may be better to wait until the following semester than to take an ELP course that is unrelated to the one recommended for you.

### **9. My department told me that I will need to take a TA Exam. What is that test like?**

You can find a description of the ELP TA Exam at <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~esl/itaexam.shtml>. Some departments have their graduate students take the TA Exam as soon as they arrive on campus, while other departments test prospective TAs during their first year of graduate study. Check with your department to find out its usual timeline for the TA Exam, ELP coursework (if needed), and the start of TA duties.

### **10. No ELP courses were recommended for me, but I would still like to take one or find another way to work on my English. What can I do?**

You are welcome to contact the ELP to ask for advice. In addition to courses, the ELP offers credit-bearing tutorials, appointment-based writing help, and periodic workshops about topics related to the English language and/or U.S. culture. To speak with an ELP staff member about which services would be most useful for you, email [esl@artsci.wustl.edu](mailto:esl@artsci.wustl.edu) or call 935-5966.