

University of Iowa ESL Programs

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# Teaching Assistant Preparation in English (TAPE) Program

**April**

2023



# Outline of 2022-2023 Developments

- Current Testing Process and Exemptions
- Changes for AY 2023-24

# Teaching Assistant Preparation in English (TAPE) Program History

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- Many states, including Iowa, have rules regarding the oral competency of all instructors, including teaching assistants.
- As can be seen in Iowa Code 262.9 #24-25, there is a Board of Regents mandate regarding the oral competency of instructors and teaching assistants.
- In response to this mandate, there is a university-wide policy overseen by the Office of the Provost referring to the ability of all instructors being able to communicate appropriately in the language of instruction.
- The Office of the Provost's policy regarding the TAs whose first language is not English can be seen in the University's Operations Manual III-13.

# TAPE Testing

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ESL Programs has been charged with implementing the certification process for students whose first language is not English (as self-reported on their application for admission) who have been offered a teaching assistantship by their department.

# Current Process



# TAPE Testing Has Two Steps:

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1. English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (ESPA)
2. English Language Performance Test (ELPT)



# ESPA

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- A test of oral proficiency that elicits language used in tasks commonly found in the classroom.
- The test is approximately 45 minutes and made up of:
  - A 20-minute preparation period
  - A 20-minute recording including summarizing information, defining terms, describing a visual, and making an announcement.
- At least two raters independently and blindly rate each sample.
- A sample test can be found on our website.



# Current Exemptions from ESPA

- Students with an official valid (within the last two years) iBT Listening score of 25 and an iBT Speaking score of 26
- Students who obtained degrees at institutions in which the language of instruction was English. This includes:
  - Undergraduate degrees and/or
  - Continuous attendance of English-language schools since the age of 12 (or younger)
- Students who served as teaching assistants at other institutions of higher learning in which the language of instruction is English, provided that they were listed as the instructor of record for a course or led a discussion section in English for at least one year, with a year defined as either two academic semesters or three academic quarters.
- Requests for exceptions regarding the ESPA can be submitted for evaluation to a committee consisting of the Director of ESL Programs, the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs in the Graduate College, and a representative from University Human Resources.



# IOWA

## ELPT

- The ELPT is the second in the two-test sequence. The test is designed to measure the prospective teaching assistant's ability to communicate in English in a classroom context in their own field of study.
- It consists of a 10-minute presentation on a topic suitable for undergraduates in an introductory-level class in their discipline (or other courses they are expected to teach). During the presentation, the listeners assume the role of undergraduates to ask questions.





# Other Exemptions

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- Currently, there is **no test score or experience** that qualifies a student for an exemption from the ELPT.
- However, a score of 60 on the ESPA will exempt a student from the ELPT.

# Certification Levels

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- **When the rating is completed, each test taker receives a Certification Level. This and a Feedback Form for the student are uploaded to the TAPE app.**
  - **A = Take full responsibility for a lecture or discussion class**
  - **B = Handle a discussion section or supervise a lab section with minimal supervision**
  - **C = Assist in a lab situation with immediate supervision or teach a foreign language class where the language of instruction is not English**
  - **D = Conduct office hours (one-on-one interaction only)**
  - **E = Grade papers or handle other duties that do not require**

# Feedback Form

## ESPA-ELPT Feedback Form

### Feedback for ESPA

<b>Name:</b>	<b>ESPA Score:</b> Select	<b>ESPA Test Date:</b> 4/11/22
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### PRONUNCIATION

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>		<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Individual Sounds</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Intonation</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Word Stress</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Rhythm</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sentence Stress / thought groups</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Enunciation</i>

### FLUENCY

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>		<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Controlling grammatical structures</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Communicating without excessive repetition, pausing, hesitations, and/or backtracking</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Choosing appropriate, sophisticated, and precise vocabulary</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Speaking at an appropriate speed/rate of delivery</i>

### TASK-BASED SKILLS

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>		<i>Strength</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Developing and organizing information with appropriate discourse markers, transitions, and/or cohesive devices</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Selecting and accomplishing appropriate language functions (defining, describing, contrasting, explaining...)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Speaking with appropriate tone, register, and/or formality</i>			

Comments / Suggestions:



# Procedures after testing

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- When students pass both tests and receive the certification level required by the department...
  - During the semester the students teach their first class, they take TAPE:5330 TAPE Orientation, a support class in which students discuss classroom expectations, student interactions, and cultural differences.
  - ESL Programs also does a follow-up observation during that first semester that does not evaluate the teaching assistant, but rather provides support to the teaching assistant.



# Procedures after testing (continued)

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- If the graduate student passes the ESPA (the first test) but does not achieve the needed certification level on the ELPT, the student enrolls in TAPE: 5300 TAPE Presentations. The student is eligible to retake the ELPT at the end of the semester.
- If the graduate student does not pass the ESPA, the student enrolls in TAPE:5100 TA Preparation: Pronunciation, Fluency Building, and Culture. The student is eligible to retake the ESPA at the end of the semester. If they pass, then they will take the ELPT as well.
- Students who do not achieve their necessary level of certification and who do not enroll in a course will need to wait a year before being retested. (A retest without taking a course can only be done once.)

# Re-certification

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- TAs who are certified at level B can be re-certified at an A level if the department requests an observation for re-certification.

# Guidelines for Departments





# Procedures to follow

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- <https://esl.uiowa.edu/programs/teaching-assistant-preparation-english/guidelines-departments>
- This site has instructions for how to
  1. Create a request for evaluation for TA Certification
  2. Request an exemption for the ESPA
  3. Find results

# Deadlines for ESPA and ELPT

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**August 1**



**October 1**



**January 1**



**March 1**

A check-in and reminder to all departments will take place on July 17<sup>th</sup>

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# Changes

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- ESL Programs will once again be part of the Department of Linguistics within DWLLC (our physical location will not change)
  - The ELPT will be administered via Zoom this August to try to provide some earlier testing.
    - Orientation for graduate students is scheduled for the week of August 7
    - For those with ESPA exemptions, we plan to schedule ELPTs August 3-4 via Zoom.
  - Fewer class offerings but possibility for more individual support

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**Thank you**

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