



Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Who is required to take the English language proficiency test?

All new degree-seeking graduate students whose first language is not English must take the test or receive an exemption from the English Language Support Program testing coordinator, Alan Forsyth (alan.forsyth@emory.edu). This requirement includes international students as well as permanent residents and U.S. citizens, and it includes students with degrees from U.S. institutions.

For exchange and other non-degree seeking graduate students, testing and classes are optional. These students should contact Alan Forsyth for more information and to determine eligibility.

2. What is the purpose of the test?

The test is used for identifying students who may benefit from language support courses their first academic year and, for PhD students, making recommendations for teaching assistantships.

3. Are exemptions possible?

Due to an extensive educational background in an English-speaking environment, students may qualify for an exemption. To be exempted, students should be able to demonstrate exceptional English language skills through their educational background, and in most cases an informal interview is required. To inquire about an exemption, students must contact Alan Forsyth (alan.forsyth@emory.edu) before the testing date. No exemptions are given on the day of testing.

Important: Receiving an undergraduate or a master's degree from a university in an English-speaking country does not *by itself* qualify a student for an exemption. A student needs to demonstrate extensive education in an English-speaking environment.

4. I provided a TOEFL score (or another language proficiency test) to my program. Is that enough?

No. Students must still take the Laney Graduate School English Language Test. This test is not used for admission decisions but instead for identifying students who may benefit from language support courses their first academic year and, for PhD students, making recommendations for teaching assistantships.

5. When and where is the test given?

For students entering in the fall, test dates are based on the student's degree program. For fall semester dates, please refer to the testing schedule on the English Language Support Program homepage at <http://www.gs.emory.edu/academics/elsp/testing.html>. Students entering spring semester should contact Alan Forsyth (alan.forsyth@emory.edu) for information.

6. I will not be able to attend the assigned testing date. What should I do?

The test is required by the Laney Graduate School, and students are expected to attend the assigned testing date. However, if a student is unable to attend because of a conflict with another graduate school event or because of other reasons, he or she should contact Alan Forsyth (alan.forsyth@emory.edu) before the testing date to make alternative arrangements.

7. What is the format of the test?

The test has two sections: speaking and writing.

The speaking section is a 20- to 30-minute recorded interview on a variety of topics regarding the student's interests, routine, experiences, and opinions. The interviewer will ask questions of varying complexity to obtain language samples. Students should listen carefully to the questions and provide detailed responses to demonstrate language proficiency. Limiting responses to improve accuracy will not improve the score.

In the interview, students may be asked to give their opinion, and the interviewer may seem to disagree or challenge the opinion. The interviewer is not critiquing the opinion but instead is listening to how ideas are expressed about a topic with opposing sides. **In addition, if a topic is introduced that a student does not want to discuss, the student should feel free to say that he or she would rather discuss something else.**

The speech sample is evaluated at 4 levels: *novice*, *intermediate*, *advanced*, or *superior* (based on the Oral Proficiency Interview by ACTFL/American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

The writing section is a 1-hour essay on an academic topic that will be given. No minimum word count is required; however, students should try to fully support their claim (ideas), follow academic essay organization, and use formal, academic vocabulary. They should also allow time near the end of the writing test to edit for accurate grammar and word choice. Students may use the Spelling & Grammar Check function in Microsoft Word. However, these tools may not improve a score. The essay will be evaluated with a primary focus on organization, development, content, and word choice. Students are encouraged to spend the allotted time on these areas.

The writing sample is evaluated at 4 levels: *novice*, *intermediate*, *advanced*, or *superior*.

8. How can I prepare for the test?

The best preparation for a language proficiency test is to keep language skills strong by reading, writing, hearing, and speaking in the language on a regular basis. In addition, students should understand the format of the test.

9. How and when will I receive the results?

Before the beginning of classes, students and programs will receive an email from the English Language Support Program with test scores and any required or recommended classes.

10. Are English language support courses required?

If scores indicate a speaking and/or writing course requirement, these courses must be taken the first academic year. Courses carry 2-3 hours credit, are graded S/U, and appear on transcripts. Please note that master's and PhD students have slightly different speaking course requirements.

All students (PhD and Master's): Writing scores and ELSP courses

Superior: no requirement; writing center or tutorial assistance, as needed

Advanced High: no requirement; program may need to monitor student's writing

Advanced Mid: no requirement; program should monitor the student's writing

Advanced Low: degree-seeking students are recommended to take the sequence
ELSP 510: Fundamentals of Graduate Writing I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 511: Fundamentals of Graduate Writing II (spring, 2 credits)

Intermediate Low-Mid-High: degree-seeking students are required to take the sequence
ELSP 510: Fundamentals of Graduate Writing I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 511: Fundamentals of Graduate Writing II (spring, 2 credits)

PhD students: Speaking scores and ELSP courses

Superior: no requirement

Advanced High: no requirement; degree-seeking students are recommended to take the sequence
ELSP 520: Seminar in Professional Communication (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 530: Laboratory in Professional Communication (spring, 2 credits)

Advanced Low-Mid: degree-seeking students are required to take the sequence
ELSP 517: Communication Skills for Advanced Speakers I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 518: Communication Skills for Advanced Speakers II (spring, 2 credits)

Intermediate Low-Mid-High: degree-seeking students are required to take the sequence
ELSP 505: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 515: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers II (spring, 3 credits)
ELSP 516: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers III (summer, 2 credits)

Master's students: Speaking scores and ELSP courses

Superior: no requirement

Advanced High: no requirement; degree-seeking students are recommended to take the sequence
ELSP 520: Seminar in Professional Communication (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 530: Laboratory in Professional Communication (spring, 2 credits)

Advanced Low-Mid: degree-seeking students are required to take the sequence
ELSP 517: Communication Skills for Advanced Speakers I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 518: Communication Skills for Advanced Speakers II (spring, 2 credits)

Intermediate Low-Mid-High: degree-seeking students are required to take the sequence
ELSP 505: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers I (fall, 3 credits)
ELSP 515: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers II (spring, 3 credits)

Intermediate Low-Mid-High: degree-seeking students are recommended to take the course
ELSP 516: Communication Skills for Intermediate Speakers III (summer, 2 credits)