

Frequently Asked Questions about LGS English Language Assessment

The English Language Support Program (ELSP) of the Laney Graduate School (LGS) provides English language support to graduate students enrolled in LGS master's and doctoral programs and to international Emory postdoctoral fellows. We look forward to helping you advance your English language proficiency.

Questions answered below include:

1. Who is required to take the LGS English language assessment?
2. What is the purpose of the assessment?
3. What is the format of the assessment?
4. Are exemptions possible?
5. I provided a TOEFL or IELTS score. Is that enough?
6. When and where is the assessment given?
7. How can I prepare for the assessment?
8. How and when will I receive the results?
9. Are English language support courses required?

1. Who is required to take the LGS English language assessment?

All new degree-seeking graduate students whose first language is not English must take the assessment or receive an exemption from the English Language Support Program. 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 more details on exemptions, see #4 below.

Non-degree seeking international students, such as exchange students and postdoctoral fellows, are not required to take the LGS English assessment, but they may choose to do so in order to participate in ELSP courses and other offerings.

2. What is the purpose of the assessment?

In line with the LGS commitment to student success, English language assessment is used for identifying students who may need language support to thrive in graduate school. For some students, ELSP courses will be an integral part of their first-year curriculum. Other students will use their results to opt into coursework or workshops that can help them further advance their English competencies. For international students seeking PhDs, results may also be used by programs to determine appropriate teaching responsibilities.

3. What is the format of the assessment?

The language assessment has two sections: speaking and writing.

The **speaking assessment** involves a 20- to 30-minute recorded interview on a variety of topics of both personal and general interest. 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 what they can do in the language. The speech sample is evaluated by two trained raters and assigned one of 4 levels: *Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, or Superior* based on the Oral Proficiency Interview from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

The **writing assessment** involves writing for up to 60 minutes in response to a prompt. The writing is evaluated by two trained raters in terms of clarity of argument, exemplification, command of precise vocabulary, and level of accuracy. Each writing sample is assigned one of 4 levels *Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, or Superior* based on level descriptors developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and other well-established assessments of writing proficiency.

4. Are exemptions possible?

To be exempted from the language assessment, students must demonstrate an extensive English language educational or professional background. Receiving a master's degree from a university in an English-speaking country does not *by itself* qualify a student for an exemption. In other words, the educational experience should be more than two or three years of study. In some cases, an informal interview may be requested to determine exemption eligibility. All requests for an exemption [must be submitted here](#); the deadline for exemption requests is July 15.

Can I take the assessment even if I think I'm exempt?

Yes. We regularly offer language support for advanced speakers and writers; knowing your current proficiency levels can help us advise you.

5. I provided a TOEFL and/or IELTS score to my program. Is that enough?

No. Students must still take the LGS English Language Assessment. The results are not used for admission decisions but instead for identifying students who may benefit from language support courses (see #2 above). Our in-house assessment provides us with additional information that we need to advise you.

6. When and where is the LGS English Language assessment given?

Incoming students, Fall 2022:

- Assessment will take place online using Canvas (Emory's Learning Management System) and Zoom (video conferencing platform)
- You will use your Emory network credentials to access the Canvas site.
- Once in Canvas, you will choose an appointment time for an oral interview. These interviews will be conducted online via Zoom August 8 – August 12.
- After making an appointment for the speaking assessment, you will have access to the 60-minute online writing assessment. The writing assessment can be taken at any time but must be completed by August 4.

Other semesters:

- Students entering Spring semester should contact the ELSP director, Heather Boldt, at hboldt@emory.edu.

7. How can I prepare for the assessment?

The best preparation for a language proficiency assessment is to maintain strong language skills through reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the language on a regular basis. In addition, students should understand the format of the assessment (see #3 above).

8. How and when will I receive the results?

Before the beginning of the semester, students and their degree programs will receive an email from the English Language Support Program with assessment scores and any required or recommended coursework.

9. Are English language support courses required?

In some cases, yes. Details on requirements and recommendations are provided below.

ELSP courses are generally 1-2 credit hours (meeting once per week), are graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis, and appear on official Emory transcripts.

Writing scores and ELSP courses

- For students scoring **Superior, Advanced High, or Advanced Mid** in writing, **no coursework is required**. Students in this range have access to Emory's Writing Center and to ELSP consultation as needed.
- Students who score **Advanced Low** in writing are **recommended** to take ELSP 510, Fundamentals in Graduate Writing, during their first year of graduate school.
- Students who score in the **Intermediate** range in writing are **required** to take ELSP 510, Fundamentals in Graduate Writing, during their first year of graduate school.

Speaking scores and ELSP courses

- For students scoring **Superior, Advanced High, or Advanced Mid** in speaking, **no coursework is required**. Students in this range can opt into advanced level ELSP coursework (ELSP 520 for instance) and have access to ELSP consultation as needed.
- Students who score **Advanced Low** in speaking are **recommended** to take ELSP 517, Advanced Oral Communication, during their first year of graduate school.
- Students who score in the **Intermediate** range in speaking are **required** to take ELSP 515, Foundations in Oral Communication, during their first year of graduate school.

Note: Should a student test Intermediate in both writing and speaking, the required sequence is to enroll in ELSP 505 (Foundations in Oral Communication) in the Fall and ELSP 510 (Foundations in Graduate Writing) in the Spring. Possible year 2 requirements will be determined based on the student's type of degree (Master's or PhD), their program, and in consultation with the ELSP.