Requirements Regarding Proof of English Language Ability

All non-native English speaking applicants must provide proof of English language ability. It is important to remember that this requirement applies to anyone who is a non-native English speaker, including U.S. citizens and permanent residents in addition to our more typical International applicants. We define “non-native English speakers” as any person who has been raised and schooled in a country/countries where English is not the native language.

Minimum TOEFL/IELTS Score

All non-native English speaking applicants must submit either a TOEFL with a minimum total score of 500 on a paper-based test or 61 on an internet-based test, or, an IELTS (academic version) with a minimum total score of 5.5 prior to admission. Please note that Institutional TOEFL (TOEFL ITP) results from schools or institutions other than the University of Missouri are not acceptable.

**Effective July 1, 2015, applicants for the Summer 2016 semester and beyond are subject to the new minimum English language proficiency exam scores.** All non-native English speaking applicants must submit either a TOEFL with a minimum total score of 550 on a paper-based test (PBT) or 80 (out of 120) on an internet-based test (IBT), or, an IELTS (academic version) with a minimum total score of 6.5 prior to admission. In addition, it is expected that applicants will achieve subsection minimums of no less than 17 on IBT, 52 on PBT or 6.0 on IELTS (subsections: Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing).

TOEFL/IELTS Score Validity

Submitted tests must be no more than 2 years old; beyond that length of time the tests are expired and we are no longer able to verify them. If the TOEFL or IELTS that an applicant submits will be expired on or before the date of their enrollment, then they will be required to submit a newer, qualifying TOEFL that will not be expired prior to their enrollment date.

TOEFL/IELTS Waiver Policy

Some non-native English speaking applicants are exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS requirement. To be automatically exempt, an applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Completed at least one-year of full-time college-level study at a school in a country where English is the native language within the last two years. (Examples: Countries like Great Britain and Australia are countries where English is the native language. India is not; English is the language of instruction in India. Ghana is not; English is the official language of Ghana, but is not the native language and not necessarily used commonly in conversations.)
2. Successfully completed the year of study (passed all the classes).
3. Full-time enrollment is defined as 24 credit hours of undergraduate coursework or 18 credit hours of graduate coursework. English remediation courses (ESL, Intensive English, etc.) cannot be included in the credit hour count.

If the applicant meets all of the above conditions, then they qualify automatically for a TOEFL/IELTS waiver. The Graduate Admissions Office will not ask for a TOEFL or IELTS test in these cases. Of course, if the program has any concerns about an applicant’s English ability and wishes to require that they take a TOEFL or IELTS test even though they have met the above conditions, they may certainly do so. The program will need to communicate this to the applicant.

**Special Cases for Waivers**

**Waiver of minimum subsection score:** On occasion, programs may feel that applicants who meet the minimum TOEFL requirement of 80 but have a subsection score below 17 deserves consideration. Programs may request a waiver for such cases by justifying or explaining why this score will not impede the progress or success of the student in that program; special consideration should be given to speaking and listening scores if programs anticipate the student will be funded through a teaching assistantship. Instructions for submitting a waiver request are described below.

**Waiver of language testing:** Sometimes a program may feel that an applicant, who otherwise does not meet the requirements for an automatic waiver, should not be required to submit a TOEFL or IELTS. For example, the student lived in the United States for the last year or worked as a teaching assistant at another university in an English speaking country. In these instances, the program should prepare a request, stating the compelling reasons why they think that the applicant’s English language ability is adequate and that they are functional to at least the level of the minimum scores that MU requires, and/or how they have ascertained that the applicant’s level of English language ability will in no way impede the successful completion of their program.

**Waiver Request Instructions:** Waiver requests should be addressed to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies, but sent either to the appropriate admissions advisor (per alpha-divisions) or to Terrence Grus (Director of Admissions). We will present these requests to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies, who will make the final decision as to whether the waiver will be granted. Some are approved, but many are not. If the waiver request is not approved, then the applicant will be required to take the TOEFL or IELTS (or retake the test) and submit their qualifying score to the Graduate Admissions Office prior to their admission.