

# Final Report — Ad Hoc Faculty ESOL Committee Spring 2023

(ESOL=English for Speakers of Other Languages)

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In Spring 2022, this ad hoc committee was charged to review English proficiency requirements as it pertained to current admission avenues into Illinois Tech.

In May 2022, the committee made the following recommendations to the UFC for review and confirmation, which passed unanimously by the UFC:

- English language proficiency requirements remain an appropriate factor in entrance requirements and standards for admission to the university.
  - As such, English waivers, which allow students to be admitted without submitting standardized test scores, should be vetted by university faculty as part of the admissions requirements.
    - English waivers should only be applied to students that meet all other academic requirements for direct entry to the university.
  - English proficiency requirements for students recruited from a third-party partner should be equivalent to those recruited for direct entry admission into the university.
    - For pathway program students, such as those recruited by Cambridge Educational Group (CEG), English language proficiency requirements apply at the time of matriculation into a degree-seeking program.
    - For Beacon students, English language proficiency requirements should apply at time of admission.
  - Each college and program is allowed to have different English proficiency requirements due to the nature of their content and pedagogy.
    - Each college and program should regularly review and confirm their requirements with proficiency experts as proficiency tests evolve over time.

After meeting multiple times during the current 2022-23 academic year, the ESOL committee has determined the following:

- Past recommendations of the committee from May 2022 do not appear to have been followed.
- Illinois Tech does have a mechanism to determine if student applicants meet published criteria.

The current admissions mechanism has three filters to assess English proficiency starting with:

- country of residence
- prior program of study
- English proficiency test scores (TOEFL, IELTS, Duolingo)

- The committee suspects that lack of training and outdated or undocumented procedures for assessing student English proficiency is interfering with maintaining established thresholds and prior recommendations by this committee.
- As an educational institution, our overall focus should be on student success. Without a strong and reliable mechanism of recognizing English proficiency in our incoming students, support services and initiatives will have a difficult time helping them succeed.
- Deviating from published minimum criteria and standards for admission has the potential to negatively impact the university in regard to compliance as it pertains to accreditation standards and immigration regulations.

As a result of those determinations, the committee recommends the following measures immediately:

1. All admission decisions (undergraduate and graduate) must follow the published admissions policies, in the Bulletin and university website, specifically in regard to English proficiency criteria. Many of the published policies for evaluating English proficiency need to be reviewed further; however, consistently utilizing the current and approved policies as a working baseline is required until the various components and requirements can be reassessed.
  - a. Outlier situations and/or variances and requests for additional waivers above and beyond those published require collaboration with English Language Services faculty prior to admission, with justification for the variance recorded in the application record.
2. Parties responsible for admissions must document all procedures (e.g. flow chart) related to English proficiency decisions for all paths into Illinois Tech (grad, undergrad, CEG/pathway, CUG, etc...). This documentation will provide the roadmap for future assessments and improvements.
3. Admissions to create a compliance report for each admission cycle of all international student admissions showing how each student has met the English proficiency criteria by policy or by variance with justifications. This report will be available for committee and/or faculty review to ensure compliance and guide future improvements university-wide.