



Campus Administrative Policy

Policy Title: **Official Measures of English Language Proficiency for Admission of International Students**

Policy Number: 7009

Functional Area:

Student Affairs

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Supersedes:	Official Measures of English Language Proficiency for Admission of International Students (April 1, 2020)
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Prepared by:	Director of International Enrollment Strategy and Admissions, Office of International Affairs
Reviewing Office:	Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, CU Denver Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, CU Anschutz
Responsible Officer:	Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of International Affairs
Applies to:	CU Anschutz CU Denver

A. Introduction

This policy establishes English language proficiency requirements for

the admission of international students to the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus (“the university”) and the responsibility of the university to determine that international student applicants possess a level of proficiency in English necessary to succeed academically. The university is responsible for certifying to the US Department of Homeland Security that this determination has been made, in accordance with US immigration laws, for students requiring visa documents. With properly documented evidence of English language proficiency, the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) unit within the Office of International Affairs (OIA) will certify to the US Department of Homeland Security, as part of the Certification of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Visa Status (Form I-20) or for Exchange Visitor Visa Status (Form DS-2019), that the student has the required level of English language proficiency.

This policy applies to any applicant for credit-bearing coursework at CU Denver | CU Anschutz whose legal presence in the United States is dependent on a valid, temporary, nonimmigrant visa, with exceptions as listed in section F.¹ It does not apply to US citizens, permanent residents, persons with refugee or other protected status, holders of valid immigrant visas² or undocumented immigrants.

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C. Policy Statement

¹ As listed in the US Department of State’s Foreign Affairs Manual ([9 FAM 402.1](#)): [Nonimmigrant Visa Classifications](#)

² As listed in the Foreign Affairs Manual ([9 FAM 502.1-3](#)): [FAM 502.1-3 IV Classification Symbols](#)

All academic units making admission decisions regarding international students are responsible, in consultation with the International Admissions unit in OIA, for determining whether the applicant has the required proficiency in English to be prepared for successful completion of the proposed course of study. These academic units must work with International Admissions to record the determination in CU-SIS (the university student records system) for each admitted student.

Undergraduate admitting units (i.e. International Admissions and the College of Nursing) and graduate academic departments and/or programs may require a *higher* level of English language proficiency than the university minimum requirements, based on the specific needs of the discipline, with the exception that no department may refuse to accept successful completion of the CU Denver ESL Academy program as proof of English language proficiency under any circumstances. If a higher level of proficiency is required, this must be clearly documented and published in all marketing materials for the academic department or program, including websites. In addition, the academic department or program must notify the International Admissions unit in OIA of any decision to require a higher level of English language proficiency in order to ensure this is reflected in OIA marketing and recruitment materials.

No academic department or program, however, may admit a student *below* the established policy minimums unless an exception has been granted pursuant to the “Exceptions” section of this policy.

D. Language Proficiency for Degree-Seeking Study

1. Applicants to **undergraduate and graduate degree programs and non-degree study** will be considered to have the required English language proficiency if they meet any one of the following criteria:
 - a. The applicant is a citizen or national of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or its dependencies, or is a citizen of a country listed by the government of the United Kingdom as exempt from the English proficiency requirement

for a UK student visa.³

As of this policy's effective date, these countries include: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Malta, New Zealand, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

- b. The applicant has graduated from the University of Colorado Denver ESL Academy.
- c. The applicant has provided a valid, official score on an accepted English language proficiency examination that meets the university's minimum criteria for admission. International Admissions will, in consultation with campus stakeholders to include the CU Anschutz Graduate School, CU Denver graduate education, graduate departments, and the ESL Academy, establish and annually publish such criteria in the course catalog and the International Admissions website.

As of this policy's effective date, the university accepts the following English language proficiency examinations: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Internet-Based Test (iBT), including TOEFL MyBest scores; International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic; Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic; and Duolingo English Test.

- d. The applicant holds a valid temporary nonimmigrant employment-based US visa as the principal visa holder, currently lives in the United States, and has lived in the United States for at least one year.

2. Applicants to **undergraduate degree programs and undergraduate non-degree study** will be considered to have the required English language proficiency if they meet any one of the following criteria:

³ As listed here: [Knowledge of English](#)

- a. The applicant has earned a high school diploma in the United States (including at least one year of secondary study in the US and at least one unit of college preparatory English coursework); or has completed an entire secondary qualification, comparable to a US high school diploma, at a school holding US accreditation but located in another country.
- b. The applicant has completed an entire secondary qualification, comparable to a US high school diploma, in one of the exempt countries listed above; or has completed such a qualification at a school accredited by an exempt country but located in a non-exempt country.
- c. The applicant has completed an English-medium secondary qualification or examination, comparable to a US high school diploma or higher, which qualifies as sufficient proof of English language proficiency for undergraduate study. International Admissions will establish and annually publish a list of qualifying credentials in the course catalog and the International Admissions website.
- d. The applicant has earned a score resulting in CU Denver | CU Anschutz advanced standing placement on the relevant Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level (A-Level), or GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (AS-Level) English subject examination.⁴
- e. The applicant has provided a valid, official score that reaches the College Readiness Benchmark in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section of the SAT, or in the English section of the ACT.⁵
- f. The applicant has earned an associate or higher degree in the

⁴ Acceptable examinations and scores are listed in the CU Denver course catalog.

⁵ For more information: [Collegeboard](#) and [American College Testing](#).

United States; or has earned a post-secondary qualification, comparable to a US associate or higher degree, in one of the exempt countries listed above; or has earned such a qualification at an institution accredited by an exempt country but located in a non-exempt country.

- g. The applicant has successfully completed the gtPathways core at a Colorado community college.
- h. The applicant has earned the following credits and grades at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States:
 - i. 24 or more transferrable semester credits, or the equivalent, **and**
 - ii. A college-level GPA of 2.7/4.0 or higher; **or** a grade of B- or higher on English Composition I, or the equivalent, or a higher English composition course.

3. Applicants to **graduate degree programs and graduate non-degree study** will be considered to have the required English language proficiency if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- a. The applicant has earned a bachelor or higher degree in the United States; or has earned a post-secondary qualification, comparable to a US bachelor or higher degree, in one of the exempt countries listed above; or has earned such a qualification at an institution accredited by an exempt country but located in a non-exempt country.
- b. The applicant has completed an English-medium postsecondary qualification, comparable to a US bachelor or higher degree, which qualifies as sufficient proof of English language proficiency for graduate degree-seeking study. International Admissions will, in consultation with campus stakeholders to include the CU Anschutz Graduate School, CU Denver graduate education, graduate departments, and the

ESL Academy, establish and annually publish a list of criteria to determine such sufficiency in the course catalog and the International Admissions website.

- c. The applicant has completed 12 or more semester hours of coursework in a master or doctoral degree program in the United States with an overall GPA of 3.0/4.0 or higher; or has completed a comparable amount of graduate coursework with a comparable GPA in one of the exempt countries listed above; or has completed such coursework at an institution accredited by an exempt country but located in a non-exempt country.

E. English Language Proficiency for Undergraduate ESL Pathway Admission

Applicants to undergraduate degree programs, except Nursing, who do not meet any of the English language proficiency criteria listed above will be considered for admission to a pathway program housed in the CU Denver ESL Academy. Any student admitted to the ESL pathway program will be placed directly into the highest level of ESL instruction (as of this policy's effective date, the highest level is level 5).

International Admissions and the ESL Academy will jointly establish and publish annually in the course catalog and the International Admissions website, the English language proficiency criteria for admission to the pathway program.

F. Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy may occur in special circumstances, as outlined below.

1. International Partnerships with Foreign Universities

Agreements establishing dual-degree and other academic partnership programs with foreign universities may contain specific English language proficiency guidelines which will act as exceptions to this policy. All such exceptions must be codified in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Letter of Agreement (LOA) among participating parties and have appropriate approvals in accordance with the agreement. Approvals include deans, finance

administration, international affairs, legal counsel, the Provost, the Higher Learning Commission, and other accreditation review processes and other approvals as warranted by the specific terms of the agreement. The Memoranda of Understanding will be executed with the guidance of the Office of International Affairs (OIA). OIA will notify International Admissions of each MOU and the approved exceptions.

2. Undergraduate Study

The international admission committee within International Admissions may grant exceptions to undergraduate degree program and non-degree-seeking applicants, with the approval of the Director of International Enrollment Strategy and Admissions. This exception does not apply to any programs in the College of Nursing.

3. Graduate Study

The dean or dean's designate of the relevant school or college may grant exceptions to graduate degree program applicants, upon the recommendation of the program's faculty. The dean or designate should feel confident, in granting an exception, that the applicant's command of English is sufficient for academic success in the program. The dean or designate will notify the Office of International Affairs of each such exception granted.

The relevant party (e.g. director or associate dean) responsible for graduate admission at the relevant school or college, in consultation and agreement with the Director of International Enrollment Strategy and Admissions, may grant exceptions to graduate non-degree-seeking applicants.

4. J-1 Visiting Scholars

J-1 Short-Term Scholars, Research Scholars, Professors, Specialists, and Student Interns sponsored by CU Denver | CU Anschutz must prove their English language proficiency as part of the J-1 visa application process. This is managed by ISSS under a separate policy, "English Proficiency Policy for J-1 Exchange Visitors" (ISSS policy). Any such visiting scholar may be admitted to non-degree

coursework at the university, incidental to their research or teaching duties, without providing further proof of English language proficiency beyond the requirements of the ISSS policy. However, visiting scholars must meet the English language proficiency criteria outlined above for admission to any degree program at CU Denver | CU Anschutz.

5. Reasonable Accommodation of Disabilities

International applicants with a disability which prevents them from meeting the English language proficiency criteria outlined above may provide a letter or summary document, following the standards defined by the respective disability services office of their intended campus, describing their disability and requesting a reasonable accommodation.⁶ The relevant disability services office will review the provided documentation and recommend whether to waive the ELP requirement in each case.

G. Notes

1. Dates of official enactment and amendments:

November 9, 2004: Adopted

July 1, 2012: Revised/reissued by the Provost

January 1, 2014: Revised

January 1, 2015: Revised

April 12, 2019: Reformatted

April 1, 2020: Revised/reissued by the Chancellors

January 1, 2023: Revised

2. History:

April 12, 2019: Modified to reflect a Campus-wide effort to recast and revitalize Campus policy sites into a standardized and more coherent set of chaptered policy statements organized around the several operational divisions of the university. Article links, University branding,

⁶ For more information, see the CU Denver Disability Resources and Services website ([Disability Resources & Services](#)) and the CU Anschutz Office of Disability, Access, & Inclusion website ([Office of Disability, Access & Inclusion](#)).

and formatting updated by the Provost's office.

April 1, 2020: Specific test score requirements were removed from the policy allowing the university to respond more quickly to ELP market changes. International Admissions will now annually publish them in the catalog and on the IA website. Existing standing exceptions were codified: based on IB/AP exam scores, transfer coursework completion, etc. Following were clarified: ESL Academy completion meeting the ELP requirement for all degree programs; the list of citizenship-based exemptions; overseas coursework completion options; and the ability to grant exceptions for undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree applicants.

3. Initial Policy Effective Date: November 9, 2004
4. Cross References/Appendix: N/A