CERTIFICATION POLICY FOR ORAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY
OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING ITAS

The State of Illinois Bill 1516 requires that all International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) must be proficient in the English language before they are given instructional responsibilities in classrooms, discussion groups, laboratories, or office hours consultations. The only exception to this policy is for ITAs who teach a foreign language and do not provide instruction in English.

As you know, since 1992 UIC has required certification of oral English proficiency for all ITAs. To assure compliance with the law, I want to reiterate this policy and give you further details about the elaborated procedures. The attached ITA Oral English Proficiency Certification Form must be completed by the hiring academic unit for all "non-native English speakers," that is for all ITAs for whom English is not the mother tongue regardless of the country of origin. One of three methods may be used to determine assessment of oral English proficiency of an ITA:

1) a passing score on one of two standardized tests of spoken English, either the Test of Spoken English (TSE) from the Educational Testing Service or the SPEAK test offered here at UIC;
2) an acceptable instructional assessment in an interview and mini-teaching session using the enclosed Oral English Language Assessment Form, or
3) an acceptable instructional assessment using the academic unit's own plan for determining English proficiency.

Additional details about these certification methods are enclosed.

The ITA Oral English Proficiency Certification Form must be submitted prior to the beginning of the term in which the ITA assumes instructional responsibilities. Certification forms should be sent to the ITA Program Coordinator, 1925 UH, M/C 162.

Academic unit heads are strongly encouraged to continue to collect information about ITAs' proficiency in speaking and communicating in English in the instructional setting and to identify and solve problems regarding this issue with the ITAs and their supervisors as they arise. Consultative assistance can be obtained from the ITA Program.
Certification Process Letter

RE: Certification Process for Determining International Teaching Assistants English Speaking Skills Proficiency

It is required by State Law (Senate Bill 1615) that all International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) providing instruction in classrooms, discussion groups, laboratories, or office hour situations, be certified proficient in speaking and communicating in English by their respective departments. Only those ITAs who teach a foreign language and do not provide instruction in English are exempted from this policy.

The attached certification form must be completed for all "non-native English speakers" (individuals for whom English is not the mother tongue, regardless of the country of origin) who are being hired to provide instruction. Completed forms should be sent to the ITA Program office (1925 OH) to be kept on file.

There are 3 options which departments may use to determine assessment of English speaking proficiency, but any option must be accompanied by a certification acknowledgement form filled out and signed by the hiring department or program head.

1. The student may submit an official Test of Spoken English (TSE) score from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) or take the SPEAK test (the institutional version of the TSE). A score of 230 or above is considered by this university as qualified for classroom instruction. The SPEAK test is offered throughout the academic year. Individual students wanting to retake the SPEAK test may do so only once every 3 months.

TSE and SPEAK scores are good general indicators but are not absolute determiners of a person's intelligibility in the instructional setting. Therefore, students with a SPEAK score of slightly less than 230 (200, 210, or 220) have several options to improve their intelligibility or English communication skills. Contact Barbara Booockmeier, ITA Program Coordinator (413.2235) for further information.

Students who score 190 or below on the TSE or SPEAK test must receive English instruction before beginning to instruct students unless the department feels that the score for some reason does not represent the student's real ability and certifies the student by one of the other two options below. It has been the ITA Program's experience that students who score 190 or below still have considerable difficulty communicating in English and do not as yet have adequate listening skills in understanding spoken American English.
2. A department may conduct an interview with the student and ask the student to present a mini-teaching session of at least 5-min. duration with follow-up questions. It is advised that an ESL Specialist and an undergraduate student be part of the evaluation team along with department faculty members. A form is enclosed to guide the evaluation. If the department deems the ITA proficient in spoken English, a hiring department member or program head must complete and sign the attached certification acknowledgement form and the Oral English Language Assessment Form.

3. A department may also take on the responsibility of developing their own plan for determining proficiency. Any plan must include, at a minimum, an interview with a faculty member who will complete the attached rating sheet developed by the Committee on Oral English Proficiency. The certification verification form must be accompanied by information on the procedures used to determine spoken English proficiency.

The certification form needs to be submitted prior to the beginning of the term in which the TA begins instructing. Certification forms may be forwarded immediately to Barbara Boockmeier, ITA Program Coordinator, 1925 UH, M/C 162. The attached forms may be duplicated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the ITA Program office at 413-2235.
UIC INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANT

ORAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY CERTIFICATION

This form must be completed for each new "non-native" English speaking ITA before they are given instructional responsibilities.

Student Name: ______________________ Date Entered UIC: ________
Social Security No: ________________ Date of Appointment: ________
Academic Unit: ____________________________________________

Certification of Oral English Proficiency: (Fill in one method of certification)

Score of TEST OF SPOKEN ENGLISH: ________ Date taken: ________
Score on SPEAK Test: __________________________ Date taken: ________
Interview and Mini-teach demonstration (see attached form) Date given: ________

Other Instructional Assessment (please specify): __________________________

Initial Instructional Assignment: (Check appropriate spaces and fill in requested information)

_____ Lecturer Course(s) and Section Numbers: ______________
_____ Group Discussion Leader
_____ Lab Instructor
_____ Office Hours Consultation
_____ Other (Please specify): ________________________________

Academic Unit Head Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

Print Name: __________________________ Address: ________________
Position: __________________________ Telephone: ________________

Return to the ITA Program Coordinator, 1925 UH, M/C 162.
FORM TO BE USED FOR INTERVIEW AND MINI-TEACHING SESSION OPTIONS

UIC INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANT

ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT FORM

Student Name: ____________________________________________

RATING SCALE: (Circle one in each category)

Listening Ability

0  Unable to understand simple spoken American English.

1  Frequent non-comprehension of normally paced spoken American English.

2  Generally understands most spoken American English with only occasional need for repetition or clarification.

3  Able to understand nearly all spoken American English.

Pronunciation

0  Frequent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns which cause near constant unintelligibility.

1  Frequent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns which cause recurrent unintelligibility.

2  Some consistent phonemic errors and foreign stress and intonation patterns but speaker remains intelligible.

3  Occasional nonnative pronunciation errors but speaker is always intelligible.

Grammar

0  No effective control of grammar or syntax except in short fixed phrases.

1  Limited control of basic constructions, but with serious or recurring errors which hinder intelligibility.

2  Good general control of grammatical constructions with errors which do not prevent overall intelligibility.

3  Only occasional minor grammatical errors.
Fluency

0  Halting and fragmentary speech or pacing which is virtually impossible to understand.

1  Frequent pauses or non-standard pace which hinders intelligibility.

2  Occasional pauses but with a pace which does not prevent intelligibility.

3  Native speaker-like fluency

Summary - Overall Comprehensibility

0  Minimally comprehensible even in basic speaking situations.

1  Usually not comprehensible because of pronunciation errors, non-native pauses or pacing, limited vocabulary or poor grammatical control.

2  Generally comprehensible with some errors in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary choice, or in pauses or pacing.

3  Normal speech completely comprehensible with only occasional errors in grammar or pronunciation.

Academic Unit

Head Signature: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Print Name: ____________________________ Address: ____________________________

Position: ____________________________ Telephone: ____________________________