

TO: Deans, Directors and Chairs
FROM: Greg Heiser, Assistant Provost
DATE: September 16, 2009
SUBJECT: English Language Proficiency of Instructors

Each year the Provost's office provides information on the University's policies regarding the English proficiency of instructors. Please review this information and forward to your unit's undergraduate and graduate programs directors. In addition, please ensure that anyone in the department who is likely to receive student complaints or appeals on this issue is familiar with the complaint procedures outlined below.

POLICY SUMMARY. To comply with state law, the University requires all instructors to be proficient in English and provides procedures for student complaints and appeals. The University's English Assessment Program, in concert with the Provost's office, is responsible for assessing proficiency and ensuring compliance. Below is a summary of the policies and procedures.

- **STATUTORY REQUIREMENT.** All faculty and teaching assistants for whom English is not the native language must be certified as proficient in English before being appointed to any instructional position, except for courses taught primarily in a foreign language.
- **CERTIFICATION OF REGULAR, ADJUNCT, AND VISITING FACULTY.** Tenured and tenure-track faculty are certified by the chair or director, who should send the Provost a written statement verifying proficiency, together with a copy of an evaluation based on actual in-class observation. Adjunct and visiting faculty may be certified by their deans, who should notify the Provost in writing that the faculty member is proficient.
- **CERTIFICATION OF ALL OTHER INSTRUCTORS.** All other instructors, including teaching assistants, must be certified through the English Assessment Program. Certification is not related to TOEFL scores or other admission requirements. A testing fee may be required.
- **CERTIFICATION LEVELS.** Instructors are certified for one of three levels of student contact, based on their testing performance: certification to instruct; certification to support (e.g., conducting help sessions, holding office hours, providing individual student assistance); and no student contract. No GTA may hold a position for which he or she is not certified.

- **STUDENT COMPLAINTS.** Students have the right to file complaints based on an instructor's lack of English proficiency. Please note that any student who brings such a complaint to the department should also be directed to the Provost's office (325-3221; e-mail gheiser@ou.edu) even if the department takes its own measures to address the problem. Upon receiving a complaint, the Provost typically requests an in-class assessment. If a problem is verified, remedial measures may be suggested.
- **ACADEMIC APPEALS.** Students have the right to appeal any grade on grounds that the instructor was not proficient in English. Procedures are published in the Student Code. Appeals should be filed with the dean of the college in which the course is budgeted.

For further information, contact Dr. Janis M. Paul, English Assessment Program Director, at 325-1838, e-mail jpaul@ou.edu. The policies referenced above are published and available online as follows: Proficiency Policy (Faculty Handbook section 3.29) and Student Complaint Policy (Faculty Handbook section 4.17) <http://www.ou.edu/provost/pronew/content/fhbmenu.html>. Academic Appeals at the OU Student Code Website. English Assessment Program policies and procedures are available from the EAP office, 731 Elm Ave. 201 Robertson and at <http://gradweb.ou.edu/EAP/>.