



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®
Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Directors and Chairs – Norman Campus

FROM: Chris Walker
Associate Provost for Academic Integrity

DATE: August 17, 2023

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 Training and Certification Services 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 must be completed before the start of the semester in which the instructor will be teaching.
- **CERTIFICATION OF REGULAR, ADJUNCT, AND VISITING FACULTY.** Tenured, tenure-track, and renewable term 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 Office of English Training and

Certification Services. Certification is not related to TOEFL scores or other admission requirements. Testing fees may be required.

- **CERTIFICATION LEVELS.** Level A: May be appointed as the instructor of record for any course in any OU department without supervision; Level B: May be appointed as the instructor of record for ancillary courses, i.e., labs, discussion sections, activity classes, co-instruction of a course while a faculty member is responsible for delivering content to the students; Level C: May support an instructor of record in any OU department; Level D: An individual cannot hold positions that involve instruction of students, but can be a grading TA (see section [3.31.2](#) of the Faculty Handbook for more information).
- **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 be directed to the Provost's Office (325-3221; e-mail chriswalker@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 Jessica Reynolds, English Training and Certification Services Program Director, at 325-3543, e-mail Jessica.A.Reynolds-1@ou.edu. The policies referenced above are published and available online as follows: Proficiency Policy (Faculty Handbook section 3.31) and Student Complaint Policy (Faculty Handbook section 4.17) <https://apps.hr.ou.edu/FacultyHandbook>. Academic Appeals at the OU Student Code Website. English Training and Certification Services policies and procedures are available from the ETCS office, Graduate College, 213 Robertson Hall and at <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/student-life/etcs>.