

Spoken English Competency Policy and Procedures for New Faculty and GTAs

FAQs

Forms to complete

Q. There are several forms related to the hiring of a new faculty member or a new GTA. What all do I need to complete to verify spoken English competency for a candidate to be hired in our department?

A. For all new faculty:

- complete the PER 20 for any interviewed candidate, whether hired or not, regardless of first language of candidate

For all new GTAs:

- complete the PER 20 for any candidate whose first language is not English
- candidates who are non-native English speakers must take a standardized speaking test and receive at least the minimum score to be appointed to a GTA position with student contact. Minimum required scores are 50 on the SPEAK or TSE, and 22 on the TOEFLiBT speaking subscore.

Visiting Professor

Q. Our department is hiring a visiting professor for one year. If we extend the appointment for a second year, are we required to file the PER 20 form?

A. Yes, the exception that allows visiting professors to be exempt from the spoken English competency process only applies to appointments of one year or less. Prior to the second year appointment, complete the interview and PER 20 form as you would for a new faculty member.

GRA turned GTA

Q. This past semester, my department employed a GRA student who I would like to hire as a GTA for the coming year. Since this student is already employed by the University, does that exempt us from needing to complete any of the spoken English requirements? Although the student's first language is not English, I have spoken numerous times to him/her and have no trouble understanding his/her spoken English.

A. Yes, your department still needs to complete the PER20 form, formally interview the student and the student must earn a minimum score on one of the tests for spoken English competency as prescribed in University Handbook section C 22.2. Given that the student appears to be able to communicate well in English, he/she should have no difficulty meeting the requirements outlined in the Handbook prior to GTA appointment.

GTA lab assistants or graders only

Q. Our department hires several GTAs each year to serve as test graders and/or to set up lab equipment, so their duties do not involve direct communication with students. Do we need to go through the spoken English competency steps for them, including requiring them to take standardized spoken English tests?

A. Yes – partially. You must still complete and submit PER 20 forms for each of the GTAs that you wish to hire. You can simply indicate on each form that the appointment will only involve duties that do not require student contact (check the box below #5 of the GTA section of the form). The student may, but is not required to, take any of the approved spoken English tests. If she/he does not take a test, then the score of zero (0) is entered on the PER 20 form.

GTA for lab teaching

- Q. We would like to hire a GTA to help students in a laboratory course, and although there is a faculty member who is the instructor of record and would be present for most lab activities, occasionally the GTA alone would instruct or guide students during lab exercises. Do we need to file the PER 20 form for this student?
- A. Yes, if the GTA will have direct contact with students, then the spoken English competency requirements must be met.

Teaching during English remediation

- Q. If a GTA does not meet the minimum spoken English competency requirements, can we still allow them to teach while they are going through remediation for their English skills?
- A. No, such “probationary” appointments are not allowable under Board or K-State policies. GTAs who are participating in English remediation may only be assigned duties without direct student contact. Once a GTA achieves a minimum score on the spoken English competency exam, the GTA can be assigned to duties with student contact. A new PER20 and a new PER41 should be submitted to HR once the student achieves the minimum score.

Rehiring a previous GTA

- Q. What if our department wishes to hire a student who has been previously employed by K-State as a GTA – do we need to complete the PER 20 form for this student?
- A. That depends: The policy requiring the PER 20 form has only been in effect since 2006. If a student was hired as a GTA prior to 2006, then YES - a PER 20 form would need to be completed, along with all the requirements that it entails. If a student has been a GTA since 2006 and HR already has a PER 20 form in their files, then NO* a new form would not need to be completed.
- * If the GTA was previously hired but not assigned student contact or was given remediation requirements at the time of the filing of the PER 20 form due to not achieving a minimum score on the spoken English competency exam, then treat the GTA candidate as you would a new candidate and follow the entire GTA procedure. If the student has not subsequently met the spoken English competency requirements, they cannot be given duties with student contact until this requirement is met.

GTA for Language courses

- Q. What about GTAs who teach upper level courses for the Department of Modern Languages? Wouldn't proficiency in their native language reflect a more appropriate standard for their suitability for appointment, rather than their English skills?
- A. It is true that for some courses, such as those designed to improve student spoken proficiency in languages other than English, a non-native English speaking instructor could be more desirable. However, the Board of Regents policy addresses the difficulty encountered by students in an instructional setting in which they cannot understand what is being expected of them due to some language communication barrier. So, even GTAs for language courses must exhibit the minimum level of spoken English competency as prescribed by the Board policy. (The Board makes an exception for GTAs teaching courses that are taught *exclusively* in sign language, who do not need to exhibit minimum levels of *spoken* English competency.)

International English native speakers

- Q. One of our prospective GTAs for the coming year is a native English speaker from a country where the pronunciation of some words is different than “American English” and her/his accent makes it difficult to understand some words. Do we need to file a PER 20 form for this person?

- A. Yes, the PER 20 is required for native English speakers in GTA positions, regardless of their country of origin. However, only item #1 in the GTA section of the form needs to be completed, which identifies the candidate as a native English speaker. If, during the interview process, the interviewers believe that some remediation would be helpful, the candidate can be referred to the English Language Program (ELP) office for assistance

Determining “native English speakers”

Q. How do I know if a GTA candidate is a “native English speaker” or not?

- A. In general, the candidate is asked and their response is recorded in the PER 20 document without further verification. However, if the person’s English speaking ability is questionable and you are in doubt as to whether they are answering truthfully, the US State Department lists the official languages for all countries and this information can be used for verification. See the “Country Profiles” links at <http://www.state.gov/> - in the “People” section you will find the languages in use in the country of citizenship for the candidate.

Contacts for additional questions

Q. Who can I contact with questions related to this spoken English competency policy?

- A. Various offices play a role in processing and documenting this information. For overall policy information and questions, contact Associate Provost Dr. Brian Niehoff (niehoff@ksu.edu). For assistance with spoken language testing and/or remediation questions or scheduling, contact the English Language Program office. For assistance with PER 20, PER 38, PER 41 or Appendix 11 forms, contact your Departmental administrative staff or the Office of Human Resources.

FAQ’s from August 2010 issued by Dr. Brian Niehoff