



DATE: August 10, 2011

TO: Deans
Department Heads
Ms. Frieda Beat, Human Resources

FROM: Dr. April C. Mason *April*
Provost and Senior Vice President

RE: Spoken English Competency policies for new faculty and GTAs

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As you prepare for the fall semester, please keep in mind the Kansas Board of Regents policies on the spoken English competency of new faculty and GTAs. The Board requires all new faculty (except those on exchanges or visiting for one year or less) and all new GTAs be assessed for their spoken English competency prior to their appointment. The KSU policy is the same – neither faculty nor GTAs be assigned to instruction or other appointment involving student contact until they have demonstrated their competency in spoken English. The requirements for demonstrating competency are slightly different for each group.

Faculty:

All candidates for new faculty positions must have their spoken English assessed prior to appointment through oral interviews by three institutional personnel, one of whom must be a student. This can be done by face-to-face or mediated means. Departments must complete the PER 20 form (“Faculty” and “Interview Team” sections) for all candidates.

1. If the new faculty candidate is found to have acceptable spoken English and the individual is to be hired, then the department must also complete the Appendix 11 (Affirmative Action) form and PER 38. All completed forms should be forwarded to Human Resources (HR)
2. If the new faculty candidate is found **deficient** in spoken English and the candidate is **not** hired, the department must maintain the PER 20 form on file.
3. If the new faculty candidate is found **deficient** in spoken English and the candidate is to be hired, then one of the following strategies must be followed:
 - a. The candidate must provide evidence of completion of a standardized test of spoken English competency and achieve at least a minimum acceptable score (SPEAK or TSE minimum = 50, TOEFLiBT speaking subscore minimum = 22) prior to appointment to instructional, tutorial or advisory duties. The score should be recorded on the PER 20, then the department should process the candidate as in Step 1 above.

OR

- b. The candidate must participate in English language remediation as prescribed by the ESL office, then meet minimum test score requirements as shown in part (a) above *prior to appointment to any instructional, tutorial or advisory duties*. The score should be recorded on the PER 20 form and the department should then process the candidate as in Step 1 above.

GTAs:

For all candidates seeking appointment to a GTA position (i.e., they will have student contact through teaching, advising or lab instruction) spoken English must be assessed using the following methods.

1. If the candidate's first language is English, no interview is required. If the candidate meets the needs of the department, then the hiring process should be continued as usual. The department should complete form PER 41 and submit it to HR – there is no need to submit the PER 20 for these candidates/new hires.
2. If the candidate's first language is **NOT** English:
 - a. the candidate must have spoken English assessed prior to appointment by **both** of the following methods:
 - i) oral interviews by three institutional personnel, one of whom must be a student

AND

- ii) completion of a standardized test of spoken English competency and achievement of at least an acceptable minimum score (SPEAK or TSE minimum = 50 or TOEFLiBT speaking subscore minimum = 22) *prior to employment*.
 - b. the department should complete the PER 20 form (“GTA” and “Interview Team” sections)
 - i) If the candidate meets the requirements in both a(i) and a(ii) above and will be hired, then the department should also complete form PER 41 and send both forms to HR. If the department is not hiring the candidate, then form PER 20 should be maintained in the department files only.
 - ii) If the candidate does **NOT** meet both requirements in a(i) and a(ii) above prior to appointment, then the department has two choices:
 - Do not hire the candidate and maintain the PER 20 form in departmental files
- OR
- Hire the candidate only for duties that do not require student contact either through teaching, advising or lab instruction. Form PER 20 should be processed and item #5 should indicate “To be appointed to position that will not involve teaching responsibilities or other assignments with student contact.” The department should send form PER 20 along with PER 41 to HR.

For additional information, a list of Frequently Asked Questions is attached to this letter. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Brian Niehoff (niehoff@ksu.edu) at 532-4797.

Thank you for your assistance and application of this policy.

Spoken English Competency FAQs:

What forms to complete?

Q. There are several forms related to the hiring of a new faculty member or 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 and new GTAs:

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

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. My department employed a GRA student this semester that I would like to hire as a GTA for the coming year. Since this student is already employed by the University, doesn't 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.

Rehire 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.

*Unless the GTA was previously hired with remediation requirements at the time of the filing of the PER 20 form and subsequently did not meet the spoken English competency requirements– if this is the case, then treat the GTA candidate as you would a new candidate and follow the entire GTA procedure.

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 who 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, as long as the GTA would be relied upon to guide students in the absence of the faculty member, then the spoken English competency requirements must be met. Consider the importance of the need to communicate in case of an emergency – the ability of the GTA to communicate effectively with students could be a life-saver.

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 act as the 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 minimal 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 minimal *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 a GTA position, regardless of their country of origin. However, only GTA item #1 need 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 official languages in use in the country of citizenship for the candidate.

Contacts for 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: Associate Provost Dr. Brian Niehoff

For assistance with spoken language testing and/or remediation questions or scheduling:

English Language Program office

For assistance with PER 20, PER 38, PER 41 or Appendix 11 forms: Departmental administrative staff or Human Resources office