
Listserv Summary: Conditional Admission Pathways for Graduate Students

June 30, 2016

An inquiry was made to the AIEA Listserv asking for insight into whether institutions offer a conditional-admission pathway for graduate students. For example, are there programs where international graduate students are admitted without meeting English proficiency thresholds, and enroll in ESL, upon completion of which they enroll in the graduate program?

The inquiry asked which programs use this system, (e.g. engineering? business?), and if a TOEFL score is required at the end of the ESL program, or if satisfactory completion of ESL suffices for admission to the graduate program.

Summary of responses:

There were 22 responses to this inquiry, included below.

Institution Type	Pathway for Grad Students	What Programs use Pathway
Big 10 institution	We have a policy pending final approval that will only allow conditional admission for students with no scores if they can prove that they did not take the test due to financial hardship or lack of available seats. Also in the new policy, there is a new provision that will allow the student a path to full time registration using courses in our in-house ESL program, and not require new TOEFL or IELTS scores.	Our current policy allows for students with low or no scores to be conditionally admitted. All programs can recommend this type of admission, but the only program that regularly uses it is Engineering. Our business program does not recommend for conditional admission, since students with such low language skills cannot successfully pass the GMAT, which is an important admission criteria for accreditation purposes. Other departments have used it when trying to recruit specific students, but do not generally offer it as an option. Conditionally admitted students are required to enroll in ESL only, and must re-submit passing TOEFL or IELTS scores within three semesters.
SEC public institution	We do not have a formal conditional admission status for grad students – though we are discussing the development of one,	

	which would be tied to our Intensive English Program. I would imagine that we would require a sufficient TOEFL score at the completion of the program – but that too is still under discussion.	
Big 10 institution	We have a mandatory, campus-wide English for Academic Purposes testing policy for all new non-native English speaking graduate students who don't meet certain exemption criteria. Thus, programs using a conditional-admission pathway for recruitment typically will choose to waive the TOEFL because this evaluation measure is in place. Supplemental English for Academic Purposes courses designed specifically for graduate students are prescribed, if necessary. Programs may offer conditional admission with a specified TOEFL score requirement. This is generally rare, and but sometimes occurs with a graduate program policy authority in play that requires TOEFL scores.	A relatively small number of graduate programs offer a conditional-admission pathway. These tend to be programs that do not require the GRE, for example, the following programs have offered or currently offer a conditional admission pathway: LLM (Master of Laws); Programs in Informatics & Computing, e.g. Human Computer Interaction, Health Informatics, etc.; Master of Science in Accounting (GMAT is required, but timing is flexible); MFA.
Midwestern public university	Our undergrad policy is that we give conditional admission for most undergraduate majors. Grad, on the other hand, we do not have one set policy. Our minimum English proficiency requirement is an 80 on the TOEFL or a 6.5 IELTS but some departments may require higher scores (like TESOL). If they do not have those scores we advise that they talk to the department directly, to see if they would consider conditional admission. None of our departments have an across the board policy of giving conditional admission. It depends on the strength of the candidate. Ultimately, the only other option is to come to our ESL program and enroll and try to improve their English and then apply to the grad school once they have met the requirement. That is obviously kind of tricky because they're already here and paying for everything but sometimes it's the only option.	Some departments like business, are not known for being flexible in that regard. However, others have been known to give conditional admission if they get a really great candidate that they want to work with.
West coast institution	Our requirement is TOEFL of 79 for entry into grad school. We do not have ESL for conditionally admitted grad students only for BA students.	
Regional southern public institution	We offer conditional admission to both undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students must past all Level 5 ESL classes with an A grade to meet	

	the English language proficiency requirement. Undergraduates need to pass with a B. No additional standard English test is need once they pass our ESL program.	
ACC public institution	We do not do conditional admits for graduate students. We sometimes arrange for ESL classes at a sister university, but do not offer them here. Some of our departments verify verbal fluency with a phone or skype call.	
East coast regional public university	<p>When we created our ESL program 5 years ago, we set up a conditional admission program into the graduate programs. The ESL program curriculum was the evidence of English proficiency. Our Graduate Dean rolled that back last year. We are now requiring TOEFL/ IELTS for all non-native speakers with no exception-- even if they graduated from an American undergraduate program, took the GRE, etc. Even if they graduated from our own university. It is a devastating reversal for our grad programs. We already have less than 2 percent international enrollment in our graduate programs.</p> <p>I know for sure the R1 state universities in our region both use their ESL programs as evidence of English for their graduate programs.</p>	
Western public university	When I was at [western public univ.] there was considerable institutional resistance to the concept of 'conditional acceptance' without a final and passing TOEFL score. That made the IEP a bit tough for recruitment purposes as we couldn't offer the conditional admission. But we did ok. I would be surprised if evidence of sufficient TOEFL scores were not part of any type of conditional package being offered anywhere. Still, there are of course ways around that by pegging assessment levels (grades in the IEP) to objective TOEFL component scores without listing the mechanisms as TOEFL.	
Eastern public university	We do have conditional admission for graduate students. If they complete INTERLINK (on campus) they do not have to take the TOEFL; however, they do still need to perform decently on things like GMAT and GRE before being granted full	We do not have engineering on our campus so more of our students are in the MBA and other areas in business, Computer Science and quite a few in Music.

	admission for some programs. We are trying to design a way for them to take two graduate courses while in the last level to show they are capable of earning good grades in lieu of standardized tests, but have not yet started that part of the conditional admissions process.	
East coast private university	Yes, we do, but it has required quite a bit of attention since we initiated the policy. It can get a bit complicated depending on admission policies, etc.	
East coast public university	We do not do conditional admission for graduate students.	
West coast public university	We are discussing developing conditional admit for graduate programs here	
Western public university		We did that a few times here. But there were just a handful of students, mostly Engineering, Saudis. They would be conditionally admitted to their program, study in the IEP up until at which point they tested at 274 on the ACT Compass for ESL which we used for pre/post testing.
Eastern private university	We have just started a two-tiered EAP program (called Applied English Study, aka AES) for prospective grad students who fall short of our minimum EFL requirements for admission. They are admitted as non-degree students to the appropriate level and conditionally admitted to a graduate program for the subsequent fall semester. If they successfully complete the AES program, they are then allowed to enroll in graduate study. We don't require them to take another TOEFL/IETLS text	This is not an option for programs whose entry-level EFL requirements are higher than the University-wide minimum, so the students expected to enroll are in engineering, computer science, physical sciences, and some areas of business.
SEC public institution	International students admitted conditional must pass the TOEFL to be admitted (Graduate Advisors, however, may request a waiver of the 550 TOEFL requirement to the Grad School when a student is very close to reaching that number, have participating in our English Language and Orientation Program, and have good spoken English skills).	
Midwestern public university	At our University, we offer conditional admission to our graduate programs. As you stated in your email, the students have to complete the ESL program before being allowed to enroll for an graduate course. We	

	do not require a TOEFL or any other exam if the student completes the ESL program at our institution.	
Canadian public university	We do have a pathway program and offer conditional admissions to all graduate programs. We do not need a TOEFL score at the end of the ESL program.	
SEC public institution	An international graduate applicant may be considered for conditional language admission if he or she does not meet the minimum TOEFL score requirement of 550 on the paper-based TOEFL or 79 on the iBT, 6.5 on the IELTS or 59 on the PTE and/or does not have an admission test score (e.g. GRE/GMAT/MAT). Students who have conditional language admission are accepted to the Graduate School but must attend full-time intensive English language instruction at the English Language Institute (ELI). If the student does not hold an admission test score, the admission test must be taken while the student is enrolled in ELI classes. A score that meets admission requirements for regular admission must be submitted to the Graduate School prior to enrolling full time in regular graduate classes. The student must complete the ELI's Intensive English Program with a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the advanced levels (levels 4, 5, and 6) or earn a score of at least 550 on the paper-based TOEFL or 79 on the iBT, or 6.5 on the IELTS before he or she will be allowed to enroll in graduate courses, hold teaching assistantships, or hold internally funded research assistantships. Students who have conditional language admission are eligible to hold only externally funded research assistantships.	In special circumstances, a student may initiate the following requests to his or her department chair. The student's request and the specific course to be taken must be approved by the student's department, advisor, course instructor, ELI, and the Graduate School
Big 10 institution	Within a limited range below our graduate council's required minimum threshold scores on the toefl or ielts for regular admission, applicants to our graduate programs may be provisionally admitted and required to take designated esl courses based upon their specific deficiency. they must achieve a certain quality grade in order to satisfy the conditions of their provisional admission and are then moved to regular status.THE PROVISIONAL ADMISSION IS INTO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM, SO THEY ARE ENROLLED PROVISIONALLY.	THE ABOVE APPLIES TO ALL OF OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS , WHICH ARE ALL UNDER THE GRADUATE SCHOOL. AT THE END OF SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF THE ESL COURSES, IT IS NOT REQUIRED THAT THE STUDENT RETAKE THE TOEFL OR IELTS.

New England private university	Some of our graduate programs offer conditional and provisional admission. We do require a TOEFL score to move to full admit. However, we have had some challenges with the provisional status where they take 2 academic courses and 2 ESL courses. Some students tend to focus on their academic courses and neglect their ESL classes. This presents issues when it comes time to decide if they will move up to the next level. We are looking at new possibilities such as creating a true pathway program that is more than just intensive English but includes other preparatory coursework.	
Midwestern private university	Over the past five years or so we have had an increasing number of applicants who want to be admitted without any TOEFL, IELTS or GRE scores so that they can first attend the English Institute and then matriculate into a graduate degree program. These students generally have such poor English language skills that they are unable to successfully take the GRE. I have generally been very conservative with these requests because admission of international students without a GRE score is difficult and problematic. So we generally don't admit students with no TOEFL or IELTS scores and no GRE scores as well. Exceptions are made on a case by case basis, but only for outstanding prospects.	We do offer conditional admissions to students with weak English language skills. Many students are admitted subject to submission of satisfactory TOEFL or IELTS scores or enrollment in our English Institute. This is something that we do regularly for applicants to the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.