

**ESL Program Review and Assessment Application**  
**October 2004**  
**Cover Sheet Information**

1. Name and rank/title of Project Director(s):
  - a. Lynne Stallings, Ph.D., Acting Director of the ESL program (Fall 2004), Lecturer: ESL Writing Course and Placement Test Coordinator.
  - b. Thomas Upton, Ph.D., Director of the ESL program, Associate Professor of English
2. Department and School: Department of English; School of Liberal Arts
3. Campus Address: CA 301 (425 University Blvd., Ste. 301, Indianapolis IN 46202)
4. Phone: (317) 274-2188
5. Fax: (317) 274-2347
6. E-mail: [lstallin@iupui.edu](mailto:lstallin@iupui.edu); [taupton@iupui.edu](mailto:taupton@iupui.edu)
7. Project Title: **Program review and assessment for placement and instructional effectiveness in the IUPUI English as a Second Language Program**
8. Project Dates: January 2005 – May 2005
9. Project Checklist:
  - a. statement of support from department chair: Christian Kloesel will submit a letter of support on Monday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 as approved by Linda Durr on Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>
  - b. Simple budget: see Appendix B

**Program Review and Assessment for Placement and Instructional Effectiveness in the  
IUPUI English as a Second Language Program**

Program Review and Assessment Committee Grant Proposal

Lynne Stallings, Acting Director & Lecturer  
Thomas Upton, Director & Associate Professor  
English as a Second Language Program  
Department of English

**Abstract:** The English as a Second Language Program has made many significant changes to its placement testing, curricula, and program policies over the past five years, but these changes must be reviewed and evaluated to determine whether they are an effective means for accomplishing the goals outlined in our program's mission statement. An assessment grant that allows us to review our placement tests, curricula, services, and collaboration with other campus units would afford us the opportunity to take complete advantage of the external reviewers' time and expertise in 2005, when our program will undergo a review, along with the Department of English.

**Project Purpose, Intended Outcomes, and Assessment Methods**

The aim of our program review is to consider at least five fundamental programmatic questions: 1) Do our new computer-based ACT/Compass ESL<sup>1</sup> placement test and the subsequent placement rubrics adequately assess the language needs of our students? 2) Are students placed into appropriate classes based on the new placement test scores? 3) Are students properly prepared for regular academic classes once they exit the ESL program? 4) Are we communicating effectively with other campus units to meet our students' needs and expectations? 5) Can we make an argument that English for Academic Purposes courses in our program meet the same undergraduate general education course criteria as 100-level courses in the School of Liberal Arts, and should thus be counted towards degree credit? With the many changes the ESL program has implemented in the past five years (see Appendix A for background), the recently imposed visa restrictions and cost of tuition for international students especially, as well as the growing numbers of permanent residents/citizens with needs for ESL, it is essential to ask these questions. Moreover, external reviewers will review the ESL Program, along with the Department of English, during the fall 2005 semester. This grant is therefore critical in assisting the ESL program to conduct an extensive, internal self-review in preparation for our external review, in turn allowing us to take full advantage of the external reviewers' time and expertise in 2005. Our specific objectives follow:

**1. Evaluate relationship between placement test and course recommendations/offerings.** After implementing the computer-based ACT/Compass ESL placement test and placement rubrics, questions have been raised as to the validity of placements into specific ESL courses. The issue of validity is especially important since students' reading and grammar scores typically determine their placement into our G009/G010 and G011 courses, yet our students' ACT/Compass ESL placement scores in reading and grammar are sometimes not aligned with one other (i.e., one score may be relatively high on the continuum while the other score is relatively low). The question thus arises as to whether the placement rubric places undergraduate students in courses that are appropriate for their skill levels. Moreover, there is a question that the level of writing ability expected from graduate students need not be the same as for undergraduate students, so that using the same writing prompts or even placement rubrics may not be appropriate. Another important implication of the computer-based test is that it does not allow for assessment of speaking skills, as did our previous placement test. Thus, questions among ESL staff are arising as to how we can help students improve their speaking skills without a test that makes clear placement recommendations for a speaking course.

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<sup>1</sup> This ESL test is one of the suite of tests offered by ACT.

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We would therefore like to evaluate our placement testing process and curriculum to ensure that we are achieving at least three goals: First, we want to assess how effectively we are using guidelines to place students into appropriate ESL courses based on their placement test scores. Second, we want to ensure that we are offering tests and writing prompts that effectively assess the language needs of all our students (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree seeking students). Third, we want to assess how we can better address all our students' language needs through our current placement test.

The assessment methods will include: 1) a re-evaluation of placement test results and placement decisions that the program has made in the past year in light of ESL and academic class grades; 2) current student evaluations and interviews; and 3) teacher focus groups (within the ESL program and in other departments) to (a) solicit opinions on student preparation and to assess the adequacy of ESL W131 and G013 writing skills and (b) to identify the number of students who are in need of additional pronunciation help.

**2. Compare ESL placement recommendations with actual enrollment.** Students whose native language is not English are required to take the ESL placement test and follow ESL placement recommendations in order to graduate from IUPUI. Although the Office of International Affairs directs students to take the ESL placement test, other students, who are not served by the Office of International Affairs even though their native language is not English, fail to take the ESL placement test (e.g., permanent residents graduating from local high schools). Unfortunately, we frequently find students who do not take the required ESL placement test or simply fail to enroll in appropriate classes based on their placement recommendations. This problem is already evident for students who are placed into ESL writing courses, but instead enroll in English Department writing courses for native English-speaking students. We are concerned that, as the English Department begins its guided, self-placement process for writing courses, students will follow the English program's process rather than the appropriate ESL placement process. Our objective, therefore, is to assess the compliance rate both of students who should take the ESL placement test and of students for whom specific ESL courses have been recommended. Assessment methods will compare past placement recommendations with actual enrollments.

**3. Assess relationship between ESL placement test and English proficiency tests required for university admissions (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, etc.).** This relationship is one that is frequently raised by graduate programs and students since international students sometimes take one or more English proficiency tests before arriving at IUPUI. We wish to evaluate and underscore the relationship between and rationale for these tests and our ESL placements. For scores on international tests that correlate significantly with ESL program placements that require no ESL courses, it may be desirable to exempt future students with similar scores from taking our placement test. Assessment methods will include an evaluation of the

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relationship between past ESL program placements and student scores on other language proficiency tests that are internationally available.

**4. Evaluate interaction and communication with campus departments and advisors with respect to placement testing, appropriate course scheduling/offerings, and requirements.**

We want to determine how well we are communicating with departments and programs that serve nonnative English speakers. This issue is important to both graduate programs and students concerning the rationale for ESL placement testing (see also objective 3) and the purpose of ESL courses, as well as undergraduate students and their advisors. One example of how interaction and communication are important to graduate students is the ITA (International Teaching Assistants) program, a small but important service to the university. Students are screened through a separate Oral Proficiency Test (SPEAK). While there is significant satisfaction with the course by those who take it, there is sometimes reluctance by students and departments to make it a priority and to meet the school requirement in a timely manner. We want, therefore, to discuss with departments the purpose of the SPEAK evaluation and the benefits of the course. Effective interaction and communication between our program and student advisors, especially University College advisors, are also important to undergraduate students, resulting in appropriate student schedules that ensure greater student success (i.e., students who place into G009/G010, a Level 1 ESL course, should only take courses that are not language- or reading-intensive if they are to be successful).

Assessment methods for this objective will include questionnaires and focus groups with campus departments and student advisors to evaluate how well our goals are being communicated and how well we are addressing appropriate needs and concerns on behalf of students and departments.

**5 & 6. Assess registration/authorization process and Evaluate effectiveness of mechanisms that are used to track and enforce ESL placement and course requirements.**

Some ESL courses currently require authorizations to register; others do not. With the implementation of the new PeopleSoft system, it is difficult to make multiple section authorizations without entering each authorization separately, but advisors across campus have requested multiple authorizations to simplify the registration process for students. Thus, we would like to consider whether the authorization process could be more efficient. With respect to tracking, we need to work with the Registrar to revise or establish a procedure that would allow us more efficiently to track and enforce ESL requirements so that students take courses in both an appropriate sequence and a timely manner. One possible solution would be to add prerequisites to our courses. None of our courses currently has any specific prerequisites listed, although we do require courses to be taken in a specific sequence.

Nevertheless, students sometimes take the courses out of sequence. In some cases, we suspect that compliance has little to

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do with prerequisites, but instead has more to do with the fact that students would prefer to enroll in courses that offer credit towards graduation. If so, another possibility would be to make our ESL courses credit-bearing courses, so that undergraduate students receive general education credit just as students who are taking foreign language courses receive credit towards graduation.

Assessment methods will include the development of a focus group including the Registrar, ESL staff, and Office for International Affairs to 1) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of our current authorization process; 2) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of adding prerequisites; and 3) examine the rationale and benefits of offering credit-bearing courses as other universities do.

**7. Evaluate success of ESL students in post-ESL writing classes and major courses.** To assess how well the ESL program is preparing its students for academic work at IUPUI, we plan to compare grades and skills of students who have completed ESL sections of W131 (and G013 for graduate students) with students' grades and abilities in future English composition classes (e.g., W132, W231, and Technical Communication courses) and major courses. For the undergraduate writing course comparisons, final grades of ESL students in these courses will be compared with the grades of students from non-ESL sections of W131.

Assessment methods will include reports from the Office of Institutional Research and a focus group including the English Department's Writing Coordinating Committee, ESL Program staff, and representatives from campus departments that serve ESL students. Final course grades will be compared, as will specific writing samples from W131 and G013 students in order to allow for discussion of both the skills that campus departments expect of ESL students and how ESL students' skills match those expectations.

**8. Evaluate the effectiveness of courses and services that we offer to all nonnative speakers of English.** The majority of our ESL courses are offered during regular business hours. However, we must reconsider the limitations and unfortunate consequences that this kind of schedule imposes on the increasing number of permanent resident students whose native language is not English. Consequently, we would like to assess IUPUI students' needs for classes that are either offered outside regular business hours or available via distance learning.

Moreover, whether or not students are taking courses as recommended, advisors are still communicating the need for additional language help for ESL students. Therefore, we would like to evaluate the possibility of offering both English-help materials through links on the ESL website and distance learning opportunities that could assist both permanent residents and international students in improving their English skills either while at IUPUI or prior to arrival at IUPUI.

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Assessment methods will include reports from the Office of Institutional Research and meetings with the Office of International Affairs and the Office of Admissions to assess student profiles and needs. In addition, we will use a focus group of ESL program staff and faculty who teach/have taught distance-learning language and writing courses.

**9. Assess effectiveness of ESL services in the University Writing Center.** Two years ago, we piloted a program with the University Writing Center to offer financial support for an ESL writing faculty member to provide tutoring services to ESL students. This partnership and pilot program has resulted in several changes: 1) we have provided support for one ESL writing faculty member to serve in the Writing Center each semester; 2) ESL writing faculty in the Writing Center have designed writing resources geared specifically towards ESL students; 3) ESL writing faculty and writing course coordinators have provided workshops to writing center tutors; and 4) the Writing Center has increased the appointment times for ESL students from 30 minutes to one hour. We want to know how well these resources are serving ESL students who use the Writing Center. This evaluation is especially important since some students prefer to focus on surface-level (e.g., grammar) concerns rather than more global level writing concerns (e.g., organization, development of ideas, etc.).

Assessment methods will include a comparison of the quantity and quality of writing center visits with final course grade. Furthermore, we will use a focus group of ESL program staff and Writing Center staff to evaluate these changes.

**10. Assess effectiveness of collaborative programs and agreements.** Last year, we piloted a new Legal English (ESL) Program in the Law School and subsequently added a new full-time lecturer to the program last May to provide English services to legal English students. Similarly, the School of Engineering and Technology has an agreement with ESL, the School of Liberal Arts, and the Graduate School that allows them to use one of their Technical Communication courses to meet English G013 requirements. Both the Legal English Program and the agreement with the School of Engineering and Technology must be evaluated for their effectiveness in assisting students. Assessment methods will include focus groups consisting of ESL staff, Law School staff, and School of Engineering and Technology staff. In addition, placement recommendations will be compared with course grades.

**Data Analysis**

We will use the findings from this program assessment to improve and strengthen the ESL program in all the areas we have highlighted above in order better to serve our students and the University. Measurable outcomes will include 1) revised testing and class recommendations for ESL students, 2) revised course content, and 3) increased communication with campus departments and advisors.

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**Evaluation and Dissemination of Results**

January-March 2005: Collect data, conduct focus groups

April 2005 Write preliminary report with recommendation for changes; discuss implications of report; work  
on implementation (i.e., revise courses, establish new policies, etc.)

May-June 2005 Complete project and finish final report for PRAC



Appendix A

ESL Program Background

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The ESL program has as part of its mission statement the following goals:

- To provide admitted international students (including permanent residents) with English support so that they can more fully participate in their academic courses of study.
- To offer to all departments uniform testing of English language proficiency of incoming ESL students.
- To conduct oral English proficiency screening and instruction for international teaching assistants.
- To develop inter-departmental communication about international students studying at IUPUI concerning their academic success and adjustment to the academic community.
- To serve as consultants for the development of further English training (such as English for Specific Purposes courses) in other campus departments.

In 1999, the English as a Second Language program completed a program assessment that addressed testing, curriculum, and programmatic concerns with respect to its mission statement. In sum, a review of ESL placement testing led to three important changes. First, to ensure the integrity of the grammar placement test, the program added multiple versions of the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MI-ELP). Second, we added a listening test (MI-AC) to the placement battery of tests. Third, we revised the oral interview in order to evaluate performance on specific language functions and more accurately place students into ESL courses focusing on speaking skills. With respect to the ESL curriculum, the program made several changes to its courses, ranging from separating the primary listening and speaking course into separate sections for graduate and undergraduate students to revising the G009/G010, G013, and G015 courses.

Although the English as a Second Language Program has made significant changes to its placement testing procedures and most of its course curricula, there has been no program-wide evaluation of the significant changes that the program implemented because of its last review in 1999. Moreover, in the past three years, other significant changes have been made to the program with respect to placement testing, curriculum development, and other more general programmatic concerns. For instance, we have made significant changes to the undergraduate writing curricula to make the program more similar to the native-speaking courses (e.g., ENG W131). In October 2003, we also implemented a new computer-based placement testing system offered through the campus Testing Center, where 356 students took the ESL placement test between January 1, 2004, and September 30, 2004. Moreover, the program established important relationships with the University Writing Center and the Law School. Currently, the ESL program serves nonnative English-speaking undergraduate and graduate students as well as students taking courses on a non-degree basis; enrollment for the fall 2004 semester is at 204 students. Unfortunately, though, we have not had the opportunity to evaluate these numerous programmatic changes and their effects on students' achievement in either our program's courses or in students' upper level courses.

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Appendix B – ESL Program Review and Assessment Grant Budget

**Appendix B**

**ESL Program Review and Assessment Grant Budget**

One course (3 credits) release for Lynne Stallings:	\$2216.35
Associate Faculty Replacement: (\$2,070 + \$ 146.35 (7.07% SS Benefit))	
<b>Total:</b>	\$2216.35

Two people will be involved with this project. Lynne Stallings, a lecturer in the ESL program for the past 3 years, will receive a one-course release (1/4 of her appointment) to conduct the program assessment. Thom Upton will oversee the assessment as part of his responsibilities as Director of the Program in English as a Second Language. (Note: Thom is on sabbatical during fall 2004, with Lynne serving as Acting Director. Thom will return as Director as of January 2005).

**Comment [LA1]:** Add the sentence I wrote in my previous e-mail to you here.