Former participants generally feel that the Seminar improved their ability and confidence in speaking and understanding Canadian English and fit them for the role of a Teaching Assistant at Simon Fraser. They also feel the Seminar gave them the skills to continue learning outside the classroom.

Their comments include:

“\[\text{We learned a lot from this course. I hope to continue to use any chance to improve my English.}\]"

“\[\text{I learned much that is not possible from the usual textbook.}\]"

“\[\text{This seminar was a great platform [for an international student] to understand and cope with the new academic settings and culture. This really gives a good transition to start at TAship in North American context. Group discussions, video presentation, video recording and augmentation of presentation skills are awesome!}\]"

“\[\text{Did you know that I am a TA now? I'm dealing with real people and... surprise... I'm not scared at all (as I supposed I would be).}\]"

“\[\text{Although I tried different ways of learning English, the chance you've been providing me is the best.}\]"

“\[\text{I was really impressed by the level of the seminar and your constant encouragement. It was one of the best language (and culture) courses I have ever taken.}\]"

“\[\text{You have shown us a good strategy for how to improve our English in the future by ourselves.}\]"

International graduate students at Simon Fraser have a high level of proficiency in standard formal English. What few language problems they do have reflect the need to develop an intuitive understanding for the idiomatic and colloquial nature of English used in Canada. Yet international graduate students and other members of the international academic community often encounter a number of fundamental problems. These problems are often perceived as language-related, but they are not language problems. Instead, they reflect a lack of understanding of the society, the culture, the attitudes and assumptions that prevail in the classroom and throughout the university.

Effective communication requires more than language skills. It also requires an understanding of the subconscious assumptions and values which determine behaviour, including classroom behaviour. Because the assumptions and values which govern educational systems are culturally based, International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) and others who interact with students as part of their experience at Simon Fraser must learn to recognize different and conflicting attitudes about teaching and learning, and they must adopt strategies for successfully meeting the demands of their work as TAs or members of academic research teams.
The ITA Program offers 10-week intensive training seminar course focusing on Academic Culture and TA Training. Seminars are held for three hours once a week, during a weekday.

> ITA SEMINAR COURSE

The ITA Seminar course provides help with spoken English through an integrated approach that puts language into social and cultural contexts. The seminar allows participants to practice skills that will help them succeed in their programs—skills and concepts learned by doing, so they can continue to learn independently outside the class. Active participation and commitment are essential.

International graduate students who have some expectation of holding a Teaching Assistantship should enrol in the Seminar as early in their graduate program as possible in order to gain the greatest benefits.

Homework is an essential part of the course structure and includes talking to and interviewing Canadian English speakers, listening to the radio, watching TV, and reading newspapers.

The ITA Seminar course focuses on two themes
- Improved ability to use and understand spoken Canadian English, particularly colloquial and idiomatic usage. Activities include group and individual work in class and may include individual tutoring when more intensive help is appropriate or desired.
- Increased general communication and comprehension skills in the context of the duties and responsibilities of a Teaching Assistant
  - practice in giving formal presentations and in leading and participating in group discussions
  - understanding Canadian educational philosophy and undergraduate students’ backgrounds and expectations
  - understanding Canadian life and society through the analysis of news and popular culture

Participants have also represented over 20 departments at Simon Fraser, including:
- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Biology
- Business
- Canadian Studies
- Chemistry
- Computing Science
- Criminology
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Geography
- History
- Kinesiology
- Institute for Business and Innovation Studies
- Institute of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
- Interactive Arts and Technology
- Linguistics
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Resource and Environmental Management

For more information or to register, contact:
ITA Program
Continuing Studies
Telephone 778-782-3380
Email ita@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/cstudies/lang/ita

Foreign students, just like me, need to learn many things before we can orient ourselves into a new culture. It was very good for me to have someone like you to ask simple questions about a different culture right after I came here. We need time to adapt ourselves into a new world. I like SFU now. It is mainly because of the ITA seminar.

Funding for the ITA Program is provided by the University through the Office of the Vice-President, Academic and participating faculties and departments. Participants in the Seminar are expected to make a commitment of time and effort in order to gain the benefits the Seminar has to offer.
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understanding Canadian educational philosophy and undergraduate students’ backgrounds and expectations
understanding Canadian life and society through the analysis of news and popular culture

Since the beginning of the Seminar in 1993, participants have come from over 30 countries including:
- Argentina
- Bangladesh
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Burma
- Byelorussia
- China
- Canada
- Colombia
- Germany
- China
- Germany
- Russia
- Canada
- South Africa
- Germany
- South Korea
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Israel
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Japan
- Kenya
- Morocco
- Mexico
- Nigeria
- Poland
- Rumania
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- Switzerland
- Spain
- Thailand
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- Yugoslavia
- Venezuela
- Vietnam

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- Institute of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
- Interactive Arts and Technology
- Linguistics
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Resource and Environmental Management

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