

Amended by Senate
on May 24/11OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AND
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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	April 9, 2011
FROM	Bill Krane, Chair Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies	PAGES	1/1
RE:	Revisions to the IELTS Admission Standard (SCUS 11-25)		

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies at its meeting of April 7, 2011, gives rise to the following recommendations:

Motion 1:

be made

An increase in the minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score required for admission to the University from 6.0 to 6.5 effective Summer 2012.

Motion 2:

To include the minimum sub scores of 6.0 on each of the four components: Listening, Writing, Reading and Speaking in the requirement for admission effective Summer 2012.

Motion 3:

An increase in the minimum IELTS score from 6.5 to 7.0 with no par less than 6.5 to register in a Writing-Intensive Course (equivalent to Foundations of Academic Literacy, FALX99) effective Summer 2012.



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies	DATE	March 30, 2011
FROM	Kate Ross, Registrar & Executive Director, Student Enrolment	PAGES	1/1
RE:	Proposed Revisions to the IELTS Admission Standard		

Motion # 1

That the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies approve and recommend to Senate an increase in the minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score required for admission to the University from 6.0 to 6.5 (effective Summer Session 2012).

Motion # 2

That the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies approve and recommend to Senate including minimum sub scores of 6.0 on each of the four components: Listening, Writing, Reading and Speaking, in the requirement for admission (effective Summer Session 2012).

Motion # 3

That the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies approve and recommend to Senate an increase in the minimum IELTS score from 6.5 to 7.0 with no part less than 6.5 to register in a Writing-Intensive Course (equivalent to Foundations of Academic Literacy, FALX99). (effective Summer Session 2012)

BACKGROUND

At the March 2010 Senate meeting a motion was passed to rename 'The English Language and Literacy Requirements' to 'English Language Admission Requirement' and 'Writing Intensive Course Prerequisite,' separating the admission requirements from the degree requirements. As a result of this motion, along with an increased concern in the English language abilities of our students, a review of the English language tests and the current scores required for admission became necessary.

There are a number of English language tests available worldwide; however as SFU has a clear preference for the IELTS exam ensuring the minimum requirements are adequate for study in the English language is a priority. The Registrar's Office reviewed the score assessments of the IELTS board, conducted an environmental scan of other Canadian universities, and collected data on SFU students. This information as well as a detailed analysis on the data collected and the performance of SFU students was presented to the Strategic Enrolment Management Committee (SEMC) in February, 2011. A summary of this paper is included below.

SFU DATA

A review of the report produced by Institutional Research and Planning in 2009 concluded that as IELTS scores improve so does academic performance. This positive correlation holds for persistence and stop-out rates at first term and after year 1. Further analysis of current data concluded that students presenting IELTS scores of 7.0 and above are in better academic standing than students who are not required to produce an IELTS score; students presenting IELTS scores of 6.5 are similar in academic standing to students not required to produce an IELTS score.

IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test is jointly managed by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. The IELTS tests English proficiency on all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking.

IELTS is assessed on a 9-band scale and reports scores both overall and by individual skill.¹ There is no pass or fail in IELTS; rather, candidates are graded on their performance, using scores from 1 to 9 for each part of the test – Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. The results from the four parts then produce an Overall Band Score.

Each band corresponds to a level of English competence. All parts of the test and the Overall Band Score can be reported in whole and half bands, e.g. 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0.

Band 9: Expert user: has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

Band 8: Very good user: has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Band 7: Good user: has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Band 6: Competent user: has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

Band 5: Modest user: has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Band 4: Limited user: basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

Band 3: Extremely limited user: conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

Band 2: Intermittent user: no real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

Band 1: Non-user: essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

Band 0: Did not attempt the test: No assessable information provided.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

We reviewed the minimum required IELTS score for admission to 17 universities. Our current minimum requirement of 6.0 for admission is the lowest. Increasing our minimum score to 6.5 makes our requirement consistent with other Canadian institutions. The 17 universities listed all have different first-year English and/or Writing requirements which may or may not require additional test scores (i.e. LPI, minimum final English 12 grade, etc.) depending on the degree program.

- University of Victoria: 6.5, with no part less than 6.0
- University of British Columbia: 6.5, no part less than 6.0
- University of Northern British Columbia: 6.5, no part less than 6.0

¹ http://www.ielts.org/institutions/test_format_and_results/ielts_band_scores.aspx

- University of Alberta: 6.5, no part less than 5.0
- University of Calgary: 7.0
- University of Lethbridge: 6.0, no part less than 6.0
- University of Saskatchewan: 6.5
- University of Regina: 6.5, no part less than 5.0
- University of Manitoba: 6.5
- University of Winnipeg: 6.5
- Carleton University: 6.5, no part less than 6.0
- Queen's University: 7.0, no part less than 6.5, min 7.0 on writing & speaking
- University of Guelph: 6.5, no part less than 6.0
- University of Ottawa: 7.0, no part less than 6.5
- University of Toronto: 7.0
- University of Waterloo: 7.0
- University of Western Ontario: 7.0, no part less than 6.5

PROPOSED CALENDAR ENTRY

English Language Admission Requirement

Obtain a satisfactory score on one of the following English Language Proficiency tests:

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a minimum score of 6.5 on the Academic modules with no part less than 6.

Writing-Intensive Course Prerequisite

- a minimum score of 7.0 on the IELTS with no part less than 6.5