



## **English Proficiency/English as Second Language Policy and Procedure**

Students admitted to the UW-Madison School of Nursing (SoN) may face challenges communicating in the English language, especially if English is not their first language. This policy and procedure provides information to these students and guidance to faculty to help these students succeed in the SoN.

The following definitions clarify the use of terms in this document. English proficiency is the ability to speak, write, and comprehend verbal and written English. Faculty is broadly defined as tenure track faculty or instructional academic staff. Advisor refers to the academic advisor for undergraduate students and the graduate faculty advisor for graduate students. Clinical courses are those that involve direct patient care. Didactic courses may include a variety of formats to cover content, but do not involve direct patient care.

### **Policy**

#### **School of Nursing Policy:**

UW-Madison SoN students in all degree programs are required to be proficient in English to provide safe patient care and to be successful academically. Students facing challenges in these areas may be referred by self-identification, a faculty member, or advisor to support services as outlined below. Students are encouraged to seek assistance early in the program. Although limited English language proficiency in itself is not a reason for dismissal, it can interfere with a student's ability to complete course requirements, leading to failure to progress or meet program requirements. For additional information see Undergraduate Criteria for Satisfactory Progress ([http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/undergrad/degree/bs\\_satisfactory\\_progress.php](http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/undergrad/degree/bs_satisfactory_progress.php)) or Satisfactory Academic Progress in the Doctoral Programs ([http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/grad/degree/satisfactory\\_progress.php](http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/grad/degree/satisfactory_progress.php)).

#### **Relevant UW–Madison Policy:**

Freshmen and transfer students applying to UW-Madison from non-English speaking countries must submit results from an English language test (either the TOEFL or IELTS) with their university application for admission. The exceptions to this requirement are 1) international students for which English was the language of instruction for all courses in all years of secondary school, and 2) transfer students who have completed a college-level English composition course at a U.S. college or university. Admitted non-native English speakers also take the UW–Madison English as a Second Language Assessment Test (ESLAT) during their university orientation program, immediately before the start of the first term of enrollment. The

ESLAT is a two-part exam that evaluates both listening comprehension and reading/writing ability. Based on the test results, students are assigned to the most appropriate ESL course; students with strong writing skills may be exempted from ESL courses. After a student has taken an ESL course, instructors re-evaluate the student's English language proficiency and recommend further ESL course work as needed. The entire ESL course sequence, if necessary, is ESL 114, 115, 116, 117, and 118. ESL 118 fulfills the university's Communications Part A (Comm-A) General Education Requirement (GER) for undergraduates.

## **Procedure**

### **Step I: Identification of Student**

#### **A. Self-Identification:**

Upon admission to the university and/or undergraduate or graduate nursing program, students will receive information on their UW–Madison ESLAT results and corresponding course placement, as well as information about the School of Nursing's English proficiency requirements for safe patient care and academic success. The information will emphasize supportive services available within the SoN and on campus. Students who believe that they might need assistance at any time during their studies should contact their assigned advisor. The advisor and the student will follow procedures outlined in Step II.

#### **B. Identification by Advisor:**

Results of the UW–Madison ESLAT are shared with the students and their academic advisors once they are processed. This is traditionally during the first 2–4 weeks of the semester. Once the advisor has the ESLAT results and the corresponding ESL course placement, the advisor will reach out to the student to discuss completion of the ESL course program. Depending on the placement level, the required ESL courses may modify the standard nursing course progression as students incorporate ESL courses into the nursing curriculum. In such cases, the advisor will discuss the situation with the Assistant Dean of Academic Programs to determine progression requirements and next-steps in accordance with this policy.

#### **C. Identification by Advisor or Faculty:**

If faculty or advisors recognize that a student is having difficulties due to limited English proficiency, a faculty member or advisor will meet with the student as soon as possible to discuss specific concerns.

1. If the student agrees to pursue assistance, proceed to Step IIA in a timely manner.
2. If the student declines assistance:
  - a. Didactic Courses: The faculty member or advisor will explore reasons, decide what more can be done (if anything) to support the student, inform student that he/she will

- be held to the same academic standards as all other students, e.g., requirements for passing the course, and communicate concern to the student's advisor.
- b. Clinical Courses: Regardless of the outcome of the meeting, if a faculty member has concerns about the English proficiency of a student enrolled in a clinical course, the faculty member will proceed to Step IIA.

## Step II: Assessment and Courses of Action

### A. Student-Faculty-Advisor Level:

1. Regardless of the source of the identification/referral, a team, comprised of the student, faculty, and the advisor will meet to assess the situation and develop a plan to strengthen the student's English proficiency. If the faculty member is also the student's advisor, the student may identify another faculty member to attend the meeting. The plan may include, but not be limited to the following:
  - a. Identify strategies that the faculty member can employ within the student's individual learning experience;
  - b. Recommend changes in program plan, e.g., part-time coursework, adjusted sequence of courses. **If patient safety is a concern this plan may include a decision to remove the student from a clinical setting until proficiency has been demonstrated;**
  - c. Refer student to UW-Madison Program in English as a Second Language (ESL) for evaluation and recommendations (<http://www.english.wisc.edu/esl>);
  - d. Refer student to UW-Madison Writing Center (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>) for assessment and assistance with writing;
  - e. Faculty may consult with ESL or Writing Center staff for additional strategies.
2. The faculty member will document the plan, including time frame for evaluation with copies to the student, the advisor, and the student's file.
3. The faculty member, advisor, and student will meet again to evaluate outcomes. The faculty member will prepare a report with copies to the student and the student's file.
4. If/when the concern is resolved, no further action is required.
5. If the concern is not resolved as demonstrated by student's continued difficulty with meeting course or program requirements, continue to Administrative Level.

### B. Administrative Level:

1. The Diversity Director (or Equity & Diversity Committee representative) and the Associate Dean for Academic Programs will meet with the student, the faculty member, and the advisor. After hearing from the student, the team will determine whether all reasonable efforts have been made to support the student's academic needs. The team may recommend additional strategies, extended time to continue support services, or other campus resources. If the team determines that all reasonable efforts have been made and the student has not met progression requirements, the student may be dropped from the program according to the progression criteria for undergraduate or graduate students.

Students who are dropped from the program have the right to appeal their dismissal ([http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/docs/appeals\\_grievances.pdf](http://academic.son.wisc.edu/studentnet/docs/appeals_grievances.pdf)).

2. The Associate Dean for Academic Programs will document the decision(s) of the team in a letter to the student, the faculty member, and the advisor. The Associate Dean will meet with the student to share and discuss the decision. Documentation will be placed in the student's file.