

ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED:

Recommendation
Decision
Discussion/Direction
Information

DATE: 24 November 2020

FROM: Undergraduate Studies Committee

SUBJECT: English Language Proficiency – Duolingo English Test

COMMITTEE MANDATE:

- In accordance with the University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Policy, the Office of the Registrar is responsible for the implementation of records relating to new programs and curricular changes once approved or reported to Academic Council, ensuring that students meet the admission requirements
- In addition, changes to admission requirements at the University level require final approval by Academic Council following recommendation by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)
- The USC reviewed a request from the Office of the Registrar to continue to accept the Duolingo English Test (DET) from applicants as sufficient evidence of English language proficiency and is submitting its recommendation to Academic Council

MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION:

That, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approve the use of the Duolingo English Test (DET) from applicants, as sufficient evidence of English language proficiency (with a recommended minimum score of 110 for the majority of programs and 120 for Education and Nursing programs), effective for the 2021/22 admissions cycle.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:

Ontario Tech, along with many other Ontario universities, began accepting the DET in March 2020 as an emergency measure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many of the traditional tests such as IELTS and TOEFL had not yet transitioned to an online model. The DET is currently recognized by 2,000+ post-secondary institutions globally and is readily accessible to anyone with an internet connection and a webcam. In the last six months, DET has proved to be a popular option among our applicant pool. Additional details are provided in the attached memorandum from Joe Stokes, University Registrar.

CONSULTATION AND APPROVAL:

- The Duolingo English Test was approved by the Registrar for temporary use during the 2020-2021 admissions cycle in March 2020 as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as many of the traditional English language tests had not yet transitioned to an online offering
- Undergraduate Studies Committee, for recommendation: October 2020
- Academic Council, for approval: November 2020

NEXT STEPS:

- Following the approval of Academic Council this test will be included in the list of options for students requiring proof of English language proficiency

SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:

- Duolingo ELP Memorandum



OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

Admissions Procedure Addition

To: Undergraduate Studies Committee

From: Joe Stokes, University Registrar

Re: English Language Proficiency – Duolingo English Test

Date: October 2020

Rationale

Ontario Tech, along with many other Ontario universities, began accepting the DET in March 2020 as an emergency measure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many of the traditional tests such as IELTS and TOEFL had not yet transitioned to an online model.

The DET is currently recognized by 2,000+ post-secondary institutions globally. The test is readily accessible to anyone with an internet connection and a webcam. The test can be completed in one hour and results are delivered to a post-secondary institution within 48 hours.

In the last six months, DET has proved to be a popular option among our applicant pool: 31 unique applicants have submitted DET scores. This compares favourably to other established English language proficiency tests. For example: we have only received 47 Carleton Assessment of English Language (CAEL) tests since 2005.

The DET measures English proficiency and reports scores on a scale out of 160 in 5-point increments. Test results include an overall score as well as subscores of Literacy, Conversation, Comprehension, and Production. The overall score is not an average of the subscores. All five scores are estimated independently and are weighted combinations of the questions that contribute to the score.

The DET is a secure test; it is based on an adaptive test engine which administers test questions from a database of thousands of items. Duolingo claims that someone would have to take the test more than one thousand times to see a question repeated. They employ both human and artificial proctors to examine each test session for more than 75 different behaviors in multiple, independent rounds of review.

DET is accepted many Canadian universities including: Dalhousie University, McGill University, Queen’s University and the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto.

Comparison to other English Language Proficiency Tests

The minimum score has been determined based on a comparison to other leading academic English tests. The minimum score of 110 is in line with our minimum IELTS requirement.

Score Comparison

Duolingo	IELTS	TOEFL iBT	Description
105-110	6.5	80-91	Can fulfill most communication goals, even on unfamiliar topics. Can understand the main ideas of both concrete and abstract writing. Can interact with proficient speakers fairly easily.
115-120	7.0	92-102	

Many Canadian universities recognize DET for their ELP requirements. Below is a snapshot of universities that accept DET and the minimum scores they require.

Institution	Score
Dalhousie University	115
McGill University	115
Queen’s University	110
Trent University	115
University of Guelph	110