To: Department Contacts and Admission Committees  
From: Peggy Allen Heidish, Director, ICC  
Re: Determining if a pre-admission interview is needed  
Date: January 21, 2015

Departments sometimes ask if our office can provide a pre-admission interview to determine the linguistic readiness (spoken language only) of nonnative English speaking applicants. Given our limited resources and the very large number of international applicants, ICC can offer interviews only when there is some reason not to rely on the TOEFL / IELTS speaking scores. Departments need to review this memo to determine if a pre-admission interview is warranted.

Step 1: Make full use of the language assessment tests (TOEFL or IELTS) recommended for CMU applicants.

Both of these tests were developed specifically to assess linguistic readiness for academic study in English medium institutions, and both have speaking sub-scores. These tests have been normed with millions of test takers and are reliable. Additionally, because TOEFL is the test most commonly submitted by the majority of CMU students, we have years of data to help us interpret TOEFL in terms of linguistic readiness for CMU programs and to correlate to likely scores on the ITA test.

For the majority of applicants, TOEFL or IELTS speaking scores are the only assessment of spoken language needed. In doing pre-admission interviews over the years, we have seldom found that our interview finds speaking ability to be different from what has been predicted by TOEFL or IELTS. Based on our analysis of TOEFL / IELTS scores for CMU who took the ITA test and on correlation studies published by ETS, we offer the following guide for interpreting speaking scores in relation to admission decisions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOEFL Speaking</th>
<th>IELTS Speaking</th>
<th>Spoken Academic Fluency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 28</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td><strong>Strong - excellent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> spoken fluency: able to handle most academic situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 – 25</td>
<td>7 – 7.5</td>
<td><strong>Sufficient spoken fluency</strong>: Can participate in classroom discussions, but may have problems expressing complex ideas in class, research groups, or as a TA. Advanced ICC work recommended to develop more robust academic fluency and cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 22</td>
<td>6 – 6.5</td>
<td><strong>Minimum spoken fluency</strong>: Has basic command of spoken language to begin academic work if not expected to handle challenging verbal tasks right away (i.e., presentations, active group participation). Will need time in US /CMU, and ICC support to continue to develop academic fluency; ICC’s summer program (ACC) likely appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>≤ 17</td>
<td>≤ 5.5</td>
<td><strong>Insufficient fluency</strong>: Lacks the proficiency in spoken English needed to handle academic work at Carnegie Mellon</td>
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For more detailed information on recommended scores and the correlation with possible ITA test scores, refer to ICC handouts: 1) *Guidelines for Interpreting TOEFL 2015*, and 2) *Recommendations for language assessment other than TOEFL*. 

412-268-4979  esihelp@andrew.cmu.edu  www.cmu.edu/icc
Step 2: Guidelines for requesting ICC pre-admission interviews

If, after reviewing TOEFL or IELTS scores, you feel there is still a need for a pre-admission interview, refer to the guidelines below. Be aware that interviews are available for only for PhD candidates and will focus primarily on pre-screening for success on the ITA test. The interview fee is $190.

To request a pre-admission interview:
Send the following required information to Peggy Heidish, Director, ICC, at <ph1r@andrew.cmu.edu>:

- Applicant's name (Mr. or Ms. to indicate gender)
- Country
- Email address (ICC will contact the applicant to arrange the interview)
- TOEFL or IELTS score, including all sub-scores (minimum TOEFL speaking of 18 or IELTS of 6 required)
- Intended program of study
- Specific issues of concern (e.g., why you feel TOEFL / IELTS speaking may not be useful)
- Oracle number for $190 interview charge

Receiving interview results

- Allow at least a one-week time frame for each interview.
- Requests will be processed in the order received and scheduled pending interviewer availability
- Results of the interview are sent by email (generally on the day we do the interview).

Contact the ICC at x8-4979 if you would like to discuss specific assessment issues for your department.