Guidelines to Help Departments Navigate the ITA Language Certification Process

Language assessment is required for all nonnative English speakers who want to work as TAs (citizenship is not the determining factor). Students have two ways in which they can satisfy this requirement: 1) taking the ITA test, or 2) using their TOEFL speaking score.

The ICC is responsible for the certification process. Departments are responsible for confirming that all nonnative English speaking TAs have taken the test before working as TAs, and for making sure that ITAs in Restricted I or II participate in the required 3-hour seminar, Foundations of Fluency for ITAs.

Help students prepare for the ITA test and for success as students
- Encourage or require new students to attend an ICC Language Support Orientation session at the start of their academic program to better understand the language challenges faced by nonnative speakers at CMU and to know how ICC can help support them.
- Encourage/require students to attend ICC classes regularly in preparation for the ITA test.

Send students for the test at the appropriate time
If possible, PhD students should aim to test in the semester before they TA. Master students can take the ITA test only after getting a job assignment. This link will help you determine which students and types of jobs require the test, and let you know about test dates. [https://www.cmu.edu/icc/calendar/testing.html](https://www.cmu.edu/icc/calendar/testing.html)

Let ICC know as soon as possible if any untested ITAs missed the official testing period
Given resource restrictions and the resource intensive nature of the test, it is difficult to offer testing outside of the predetermined testing time once ICC classes are in session. Departments can request a special “make-up” test ($100 per test) depending on rater availability.

Verify ITA test status before assigning TA job
Nonnative English speaking TAs should not be in classrooms, labs or office hours until they have an official ITA certification from ICC. Some “best practices” include: asking students to fill out a “TA application” that includes a question about ITA test status and keeping an up-to-date database of ITA test results (contact ICC if you do not have records for your department).

Confirm that your department is in compliance by returning the ITA monitoring report request at the start of each semester
Each semester the ICC must complete an International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Monitoring report that confirms for the Provost that all departments are in compliance with Carnegie Mellon’s policy developed, in part, to comply with the Pennsylvania Fluency in Higher Education Act: [http://www.cmu.edu/policies/faculty/evaluation-certificate-english-fluency-instructors.html](http://www.cmu.edu/policies/faculty/evaluation-certificate-english-fluency-instructors.html)

Make sure ITAs in Restricted I or II participate in the required 3-hour seminar, Foundations of Fluency for ITAs, before beginning the TA job
At the start of each semester, ICC sends departments a report to indicate which students have attended the required seminar. To make sure that ITAs have ample opportunity to attend the seminar, ICC offers multiple sessions after each testing period and during the first few weeks of each semester.