Academic Policies Committee: Duolingo Request
April 20, 2021

Request

Center for International Education (CIE) is requesting that University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire adopt the use of Duolingo English Test as accepted evidence of English proficiency for undergraduate admission for a two-year trial period. Proposed period would begin for students applying for spring 2022 admission through spring 2024 admission. During which time, students’ performance and progress will tracked. In fall 2023, CIE and stakeholders will return to APC with updates and future recommendations, which may include full adoption, discontinuation, or other recommend use.

The following scores have been calibrated to match the UW-Eau Claire and UW-Eau Claire-Barron County TOEFL ibt and IELTS scores for admission.

Full Admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>TOEFL ibt</th>
<th>IELTS</th>
<th>Proposed Duolingo</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UWEC-Main</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Students will also need to take ESL 305 upon arrival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWEC-Barron County</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intensive English Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>TOEFL ibt</th>
<th>IELTS</th>
<th>Proposed Duolingo</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UWEC-Main</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWEC-Barron County</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No ESL Program at UWEC-Barron County.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information on score comparison is available at [https://englishtest.duolingo.com/scores](https://englishtest.duolingo.com/scores).

**Test results are valid for two years:** [How long are my Duolingo English Test results valid for? – Duolingo English Test (zendesk.com)].

**What is Duolingo English Test?**

Duolingo English Test is a computer adaptive and secure test that students can take in their home as long they have a computer and webcam.
Rationale

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, many testing centers around the world closed, which made it extremely challenging for students to obtain evidence of English proficiency required for admission to U.S. universities. At UW-Eau Claire, this problem was most acute for our students from China. As a result of this challenge, many U.S. universities adopted the Duolingo English Test as alternative to more traditional TOEFL and IELTS. According to Duolingo, the company has experienced a 2,000%+ growth in institutions accepting the test in 2020. Given the convenience of the Duolingo English Test and significantly lower cost, the test use is expected to continue post-pandemic.

Please note that the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), which under the Department of Homeland Security, requires all U.S. universities to establish a minimum level of English proficiency for admission. However, you can see in Appendix A that scores vary across University of Wisconsin System and other peer institutions.

Test Security

Test security uses artificial intelligence and data forensics to create individually customized test sessions. Per Duolingo:

- ID Verification occurs through a combination of Computer Vision, AI, and trained proctors.
- Test questions are administered from a database of thousands of items. A student would need to take the test more than 1,000 times to see a repeated question.
- Students are recorded while taking the exam. Human proctors with the help of AI examine each test session for more than 75 different behaviors in multiple reviews.
- Browser lockdown occurs if student attempts to access external applications or plugins.
- Test rules include:
  - Must be alone in quiet, well-lit room
  - Ears must be visible and uncovered
  - Face must be visible and unobscured
  - No headphones or earphones
  - No outside materials including mobile devices, notes, or textbooks
  - No communication with anyone else
  - No writing utensils or paper
  - Do not look away from screen
  - Do not leave the test window on your web browser for any reason

Other Institutions who Accept the Test

The following U.S. institution participating in the Sino-American dual degree program (CHEPD 1+2+1) accept the test. Although others accept the test, these universities have common partners with UWEC and/or are top performing institutions in the program:
- Troy University, AL
- University of Northern Alabama, AL
- Northern Arizona University, AZ
- Salem State University, MA
- George Mason University, VA (for 2021-2022 year only)
- University of Wisconsin-Stout, WI

Other UW System institutions that accept the test for admission:

- **UW-La Crosse** Duolingo score: 100
- **UW-Madison, effective 2021**, scroll down to English Language Proficiency Exams, actual required scores for TOEFL ibt, IELTS, and Duolingo are not publicly available
- **UW-Milwaukee** Duolingo score: 120
- **UW-Stout** Duolingo score: 95
- **UW-Superior** Duolingo score: 100

A full list of institutions accepting the test can be found at [https://englishtest.duolingo.com/institutions](https://englishtest.duolingo.com/institutions).

**Advantage to the Student**

At $49 U.S., the Duolingo English Test is significantly cheaper than other standardized tests. TOEFL ibt and IELTS costs vary location. TOEFL ibt registration for Malaysia is $195 U.S.; IELTS cost is 795 RM (~$193 U.S.). Students taking TOEFL and IELTS incur additional cost related to travel as many students due not reside in cities with a testing center.

Another benefit to students is that they can send results to unlimited number of schools whereas TOEFL and IELTS charge for if student exceeds more than 4-5 schools. As Ami Christensen stated on April 20th APC meeting, Duolingo English Test does provide greater access and equity to students who live in areas far from testing centers. Per Duolingo research, there is one test center for every 2 million people versus one internet user per 2.2 people.

**Advantages to UWEC**

UW-Eau Claire stays competitive as a destination for international undergraduate students. As families and students opt for Duolingo, they may choose to apply exclusively to universities that accept Duolingo English Test given the significant cost savings. By not accepting Duolingo English Test, UWEC may lose applicants to other universities that accept the test.

International student landscape is growing more competitive. Since the pandemic, UWEC has lost 30% of its international student between spring 2020 and spring 2021. Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. saw three years of declining international student enrollment. Commonly cited reasons for this trend are:

- Cost of studying in U.S.
- Recent anti-immigrant rhetoric/politics
- Safety issues- gun violence/anti-Asian violence
• Increased competition with other Anglophone countries and programs- UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand as well as English taught programs in Europe and Asia.