

POLICY TITLE:

Program Admission - English Proficiency

Last Revision/Review Date: 5/1/2026 NFSO

Previous Review Dates: 3/7/2025 (edits MH 3/17/2026)

Original Policy Date:

Sponsoring Committee(s): School Leadership Team – Academic Policy

DESCRIPTION:

Nursing students must be able to communicate clearly and effectively in English with patients and members of the healthcare team using standard, professional medical terminology. Communication may occur during highly stressful, crisis situations requiring a strong command of verbal and written language skills and timely interpretation of patient data. Clinical agency affiliation agreements require attestation of English proficiency of students entering clinical rotations. To meet these needs, SON undergraduate and graduate clinical programs require students to have a higher level of English proficiency than university admission to assure preparation for the rigor of programmatic coursework and to meet clinical agency requirements.

PROCEDURE:

1. If an applicant's transcripts come from outside the US, then the applicant will need to demonstrate English proficiency by meeting one of the following SON admission criteria
 - a. Michigan English Test – minimum overall score 64 with minimum of 64 on listening, reading, speaking and writing subscores.
 - b. Cambridge English – B2 First Test – minimum overall score 176 with minimum of 169 Use of English, 162 writing, 169 listening, and 176 speaking subscores.
 - c. TOEFL a minimum of 83 on the internet-based test (iBT) with a minimum score of 18 reading, 18 listening, 26 speaking, and 21 writing.
 - d. IELTS (International English Language Testing System)—Minimum of 6.5 total, no score lower than 6 and a minimum speaking subscore of 7.
 - e. GATEWAY English Test – overall score of 475, with all sections with a score of 430 or above.

2. If an applicant does not meet the required standard for program admission, the student will be provided information for UNC's Intensive English Program (IEP) (<https://www.unco.edu/global/services-programs/intensive-english-program/>).
 - a. If the student meets the other requirements for admission to the program, they may be offered conditional admission to the nursing program they have applied to while they complete the IEP or document proficiency through another process.
 - b. Depending on the timeline of the IEP, the applicant may have their admission deferred for 1 year to allow for completion and readiness for the nursing program.
 - c. The applicant will be required to complete through level 7 of the UNC IEP program in preparation for the nursing program they have conditional admission. Upon completion of the level 7 course, the applicant will need to demonstrate English proficiency through retesting and meeting the criteria listed in 1a-e before being fully admitted to the program.

3. If an applicant, whose transcripts come from outside the US, fails to provide documentation of English proficiency at the time of application/admission, they may be required to submit documentation of English proficiency at the start or during the program. Determination of the need to provide further documentation will occur on a case-by-case basis by the relevant program coordinator and appropriate university resources (i.e. Office of Global Engagement).

4. Non-international students (e.g. permanent residents) whose primary language is not English, may be required to submit documentation of English proficiency at the start or during the program. Determination of the need to provide further documentation will occur on a case-by-case basis by the relevant program coordinator and appropriate university resources (i.e. Office of Global Engagement).
5. SON English proficiency requirements will be communicated to departments across campus to provide to prospective students and families who inquire about the program and professional advising centers.
6. Prospective students shall be informed of the requirement during the application process through the SON and NursingCAS. This policy will also be published in SON program handbooks and on the UNC SON program pages.

UNC graduate level criteria (2026) - (<https://unco.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/graduate-catalog/general-information/international-admission/demonstration-of-english-proficiency/>):