

## **Transcript of ESPA Test Procedures and Guidelines**

NARRATOR:

Welcome to this video overview of the English Speaking Proficiency Assessment or ESPA general test administered by ESL Programs at The University of Iowa.

The ESPA general test is given to all prospective teaching assistants, TAs, whose first language is not English, after their department has nominated them for teaching contracts.

The ESPA general test is the first step in assessing your spoken proficiency in English for the purpose of teaching. The test is made up of six tasks, which allow you to demonstrate how well you use spoken English to perform a variety of functions related to classroom activities. It is recorded in a language lab, and then each test is independently rated by two trained ESL instructors. The instructors evaluate the answers in terms of functional, sociolinguistic, discourse, and linguistic competencies.

The first part of the ESPA consists of a summary. You will have twenty minutes to read an article and take brief notes on it. This will take place in a classroom. Then you will go into a language lab, where you will have four minutes to give an oral summary about what you read. Your goal is to imagine that you are presenting the information from the article to an audience who is not familiar with it.

In part two, you will receive a list of twenty words from the academic words list, which you will need to pronounce. You will have thirty seconds to study the list and one minute to pronounce them one by one.

For part three, you will see five sentences which contain some of the words from the vocabulary list in part two. You will have one minute to study the sentences, and then one minute to read the sentences aloud.

In part four of the test, you will be given five words from the academic word list to study for 90 seconds. You will choose as many of those words to define as you would like during the two-minute speaking period. In this section of the test, we require you to speak for the full two minutes, but the number of words you define during that time is your choice.

The next part of the test is a graph interpretation task. You will study a graph for ninety seconds and then have three minutes to describe and interpret that graph, as if you were doing so for a group of students who was just seeing the graph for the first time.

The final section of the ESPA test is an announcement role play, in which you pretend that you need to announce some information to a group of undergraduate students in your class. You will have two minutes to study the announcement and two minutes to present the information.

You cannot sign up for the test directly, by yourself. If your department is considering you for a teaching assistant position, they will contact ESL Programs to register you.

The test is given before the beginning of each semester. You will receive information from your department or ESL Programs regarding when you should come to the ESL office to get the exact time of your test.

This should not be a problem, since ESL Programs works with the Office of International Students and Scholars with regard to arrival dates and new student orientation. In the unlikely event that you cannot make it to the test date due to a scheduling problem, you need to contact ESL Programs immediately to explain the problem. If a resolution cannot be made, you may not be able to be tested until the next scheduled test date.

You need to bring only your student ID card. A pencil will be provided for you.

The date you can get your results will be listed on the check-in seat assignment paper you receive when you arrive at the test.

No, the results will not be sent to you. You must go to the ESL office in 1112 University Capitol Centre with your student ID to get your results on the day indicated on the check-in seat assignment slip that you received at the ESPA test.

If you pass the ESPA test and you don't pick up your results, you will miss being registered for the second component of TA certification, called the English Language Performance Test, or ELPT, which typically occurs on the day following the release of the ESPA test results. If you did not pass the ESPA test, you will be recommended to take Teaching Assistant Preparation in English or TAPE classes based on your problem areas. If you don't pick up your results, you will potentially miss the opportunity to get into a class or on a waiting list for the current semester. That means you would have to wait a semester to take a TAPE class.

If you fail the ESPA general test, you will be recommended to take TAPE Pronunciation, TAPE Fluency, or both classes. Near the end of the semester in those classes, you will be retested. If you decide not to take one of the recommended TAPE classes, you will not be allowed to retest for one year.

The ESPA general test is graded on a 20 to 60 point scale, with a score of 60 representing native-like communication strategies. Each question on the test is rated from 20 to 60 with questions 1, 5, and 6 each being weighted as 25 percent of the total score, or 75 percent when added together. Questions 2 and 3 are averaged together, and then their sum is averaged with the sum of question 4. That result then makes up the final 25 percent of your total score. Each test-taker's test is independently rated by two trained ESL professionals. Their scores are averaged and then rounded to get your final score.

A passing score on the ESPA general test is 50.

If you get a score of 60 on the ESPA general test, you will be exempted from taking the English Language Performance Test, or ELPT.

If you have more questions, contact ESL Programs at 319-335-5630 or [esl-program@uiowa.edu](mailto:esl-program@uiowa.edu).