

Policy on Faculty Communications Proficiency

**SOURCE: SBHE Policy Manual, Section 609
N.D.C.C. Section 15-10-13.1**

1. **PURPOSE:** Lake Region State College has established a process for verifying communication skills for all personnel whose appointments include classroom instruction. Communication, both oral and written, is, by definition, an interchange involving both the sender and the receiver. Lake Region State College has taken both sender and receiver into account when developing communication skills verification. The policy affirms the university commitment to cultural diversity, as articulated by the Lake Region State College mission statement and general education outcomes.

The policy is supportive of all LRSC instructional personnel and their efforts to continuously improve their communication skills.

2. PROCESS AND STANDARDS FOR VALIDATING AND ASSESSING PROFICIENCY

2.1 New Faculty and Other Instructional Staff:

The minimum qualifications for the position will include "effective oral and written communication skills.

2.1.1

Validating written communication proficiency:

Candidates who are formally interviewed may be required provide materials suitable for evaluating written communication proficiency. Such materials should include a letter of application and samples of their written work(s). In addition, the search committee may wish to specifically request that letters of reference include comments concerning communication. Members of the search committee will use categories of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in evaluating written communication proficiency. An overall rating of satisfactory is considered to be a minimal qualification.

2.1.2 Validating spoken communication proficiency:

Candidates who are formally interviewed may be required to make an oral presentation suitable for evaluating communication proficiency. Members of the search committee will use categories of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in evaluating spoken communication proficiency. An overall rating of satisfactory is considered to be a minimal qualification.

2.2.1 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL):

All potential teaching faculty whose first language is not English must submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of no less than 600 (or equivalent computer score) to the college. A score of 600 is considered to demonstrate near-native proficiency in listening comprehension, the ability to understand English as spoken in North America, structure and written expression, the ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English, vocabulary and reading comprehension, and the ability to understand nontechnical reading matter. The TOEFL examination is administered throughout the year locally, regionally, and in the students' homelands.

2.2.2 Requirements for spoken communications proficiency:

Potential teaching faculty whose first language is not English must obtain a minimum score of 250 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE). This locally administered examination assesses oral language proficiency of English spoken in North America. It evaluates a person's overall comprehensibility, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. A score of 250 indicates that the individual is generally comprehensible to Americans who are not used to listening to speakers whose first language is not English. Table 1 provides descriptions of TSE test score ranges and their meanings.

Table 1. Generic Description of TSE Test Score Ranges

150-199	Generally comprehensible but with frequent errors in pronunciation, grammar, choice of vocabulary items, and with some pauses and rephrasing.
200-249	Generally comprehensible with some errors in pronunciations, grammar, choice of vocabulary items, or with pauses or occasional rephrasing.
250-300	Completely comprehensible in normal speech, with occasional grammatical or pronunciation errors in very colloquial phrases.

Table 2 provides information concerning the relationship between TSE scores and duties that Faculty are allowed to perform.

Table 2. Relationship Between Minimum TSE Scores and Allowable Teaching Responsibilities

250 Classroom Instructor	Responsible for developing and delivering lecture materials to undergraduate students. The overall plan for the course is the responsibility of a full-time faculty member, but the specific classroom material is the responsibility of the graduate student. The graduate student presents new material to students and evaluates their performance through testing, etc
225 Laboratory Teaching Assistant	Responsible for guiding undergraduate students during the performance of laboratory experiments, assuring that the experiments are carried out safely. The experiments performed and the laboratory instruction sheets are the responsibility of the full-time faculty member. The graduate assistant reviews material that is pertinent to the experiment, answers questions that arise, and oversees the students' experimental procedure. He/she also grades the laboratory reports that are submitted.
225 Recitation Teaching Assistant	Responsible for working assigned homework problems in front of a class of 20 to 30 students and answering questions students ask about these problems. Full written solutions to the homework are prepared by the faculty member responsible for the lecture part of the course. The Recitation Teaching Assistant is given these solutions to study several days before the recitation class meets.
225 Tutor	Responsible for assisting students to develop understanding of concepts and other material covered in courses. Tutors students on a regularly scheduled basis or during scheduled office hours. Meets with course instructor on a weekly basis to discuss potential difficulties in course content.
225 Grading Assistant	Responsible for grading papers and problems submitted by students to a full-time faculty member in a lecture course. The full-time faculty member is responsible for selecting the assigned homework to be graded. The grader has no direct contact with the students.

2.3 Temporary Instructional Staff:

Departments/units are responsible for determining and documenting the communication proficiency of temporary or part-time instructional staff whom are not hired through an open search process.

3. DETERMINATION OF PROFICIENCY PRIOR TO EMPLOYMENT:

As described within Section A, potential teaching assistants and faculty are evaluated for proficiency prior to employment.

4. REGISTRATION OF CONCERNS

The resolution of conflicts concerning communication proficiency is best solved as close to the source as possible. Students are urged to contact the instructor to discuss concerns. If the conflict cannot be resolved with the instructor, the student may meet with the Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Vice President's designee. Administrators who receive formal complaints must respond and take appropriate action within 15 days. Students should move from one level to another only if an acceptable resolution cannot be reached at the lower level. Any one retaliating against a student who files a complaint under this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The ultimate responsibility for the resolution of such complaints will reside with the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. This office will be responsible for verifying the appropriate remedial action, if needed, is carried out.

5. STUDENT NOTIFICATION

This policy will be referenced in the Student Handbook, College Catalog and posted on the college web site.

6. REVIEWING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed periodically but at an interval of not less than every two years by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs or designee.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS

Employees who feel that they may have been discriminated against by the application of this policy may utilize the Equal Opportunity grievance process at the University.