



UNIVERSITY of  
DENVER

## **English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)**

University of Denver

Administered by the English Language Center at DU

The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), conducted by the faculty of the DU English Language Center (ELC), is a performance based assessment and consists of two sections: reading/writing and speaking. Students do not need to study in advance because of the style of assessment used.

### ***Who is required to take the ELPA?***

All international students who are non-native speakers of English, and have not yet completed 30 transferrable academic semester college/university credits at an institution where English is the language of instruction and examination, are required to take the ELPA.

### ***How is the reading/writing portion of the ELPA administered?***

During a two-hour segment, all students are asked to provide writing samples by responding to specific prompts. The writing samples are completed online prior to arrival on campus. **Students who are required to take the ELPA will be emailed instructions for how to complete the assessment online.**

A student's writing samples are reviewed by two ELC instructors to assess the student's ability to communicate in a manner that can be easily understood by a native speaker of English. The components that the instructors look for are the student's:

- ability to organize their thoughts
- ability to develop and support their main ideas
- ability to reference a source text appropriately – paraphrasing, quoting, etc.
- ability to use word forms, vocabulary, and complex sentence structures at a level of sophistication appropriate for university study
- ability to use correct sentence structure, word order, grammar, punctuation, sentence variety, and transitions. We do not hold students accountable for more superficial errors such as comma use, minor spelling errors, etc.

### ***How is the speaking portion of the ELPA administered?***

The speaking section of the assessment takes approximately 15 minutes and is completed in groups of three to five students. When the students arrive for the assessment, they are first given 5 minutes to individually read and understand a case study describing a typical situation that an international student might face at a university in the United States. Then, during a 10-minute session, the small group of students is asked to discuss the case study using four guiding questions while two instructors listen to their conversation and assess each student's speaking fluency, pronunciation, comprehensibility, ability to participate in a discussion group, ability to understand the other students and the instructor, and their ability to ask and answer questions.

### ***Why do students need to test?***

As part of the Common Curriculum at DU, most students must complete a foreign language requirement. Based on their assessment scores, students must complete 4, 8, or 12 language credits in order to fulfill the requirement. Similarly, non-native speakers of English, regardless of TOEFL or IELTS test scores, will be required to take the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). The results of the assessment will determine placement into English language credit courses in the LAUNCH Curriculum for which students receive credit toward their degree and fulfill the language requirement.

### ***What is the LAUNCH Curriculum?***

The courses in the LAUNCH Curriculum are designed to help students be more successful in their academic programs by improving their proficiency in English, learning about being part of an American institution of higher education, and learning more about U.S. culture.

Students who are identified through the ELPA as needing no further English language training will be required to enroll in one 4-credit class focusing on U.S. culture. Students who are identified as needing additional training in either writing or speaking will be required to take 8 credits: a 4-credit course in the skill where additional assistance is needed, as well as the aforementioned culture course. Students who are identified as needing both writing and speaking will be required to take 12 credits: the writing, speaking, and culture courses. Students who have been conditionally admitted to the University will take all three courses as their final level in the English Language Center.

### ***Course Descriptions***

**ENGG 1100 - Exploring US Culture** - Designed as a foundational course for international students, this course examines the dynamic nature of US culture. While acquiring a language is the first step for successful integration into a nonnative country, it is only the beginning. Once the language is acquired, one must learn the dynamic and pluralistic nuances every culture has. Students are introduced to the pluralistic nature of contemporary American values and reflect on how these values interact. Students are also given the opportunity to locate their cultural identity and role in the greater multicultural community at DU.

**ENGG 1080 - Speaking Strategically** - Designed as a foundational course for international students, this course prepares students to effectively communicate orally for a variety of academic purposes. Through the use of content selected by the instructor, students learn to synthesize information from a variety of different sources, deliver a critical and comprehensible prepared presentation, initiate successful oral discussion strategies during classroom discussions, and critically contribute to a variety of academic conversations. Students are also expected to demonstrate the ability to critically listen and respond to sustained lectures or speeches.

**ENGG – 1090 - Writing that Matters** - Designed as a foundational course for international students, this course prepares students to effectively communicate through writing for a variety of academic purposes. Through the use of content selected by the instructor, students learn to synthesize texts, critically respond to a variety of source materials, critically write in a way that contributes to the greater academic discussion, and analyze written texts of various genres and styles according to author purpose, audience, and ways of reasoning or logic.