English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)
University of Denver
Administered by the English Language Center at DU
Revised 03/03/2016

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.

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 on a computer.

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?
The results of the ELPA are used for:
placement into English language credit courses, called the LAUNCH Curriculum

What is the LAUNCH Curriculum?
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 English speaking international students who are directly admitted to the University will take the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) during orientation in order to place them in their Common Curriculum language requirement. This language requirement will help both improve their level of English, and also teach what it means to be part of an American institution of higher learning.

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.