QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER ACCOUNTABILITY: COMPUTERIZATION OF A MANDATE-DRIVEN PLACEMENT TEST

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In the Fall of 2008, due to a change of emphasis to increase the diversity on campus, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign saw a large increase in the number of international undergraduate students. This increase led to a surge in the number of students that needed to take the University’s ESL placement test, the UIUC English Placement Test (EPT), in order to accurately place students into appropriate ESL course(s) and to provide English language instruction to these students. Prior to the surge of 2008, the undergraduate EPT test-takers constituted only approximately 22% of the total number of test-takers. During the 2008-2009 academic year, the number of undergraduate EPT test-takers almost tripled from the previous academic year, comprising approximately 43% of the total number of test-takers. Due to this surge, there was an increased demand the undergraduate academic advising community at UIUC for remote ESL testing. This demand was to allow admitted international undergraduate students to take the EPT before arriving on campus because undergraduate advisors needed students’ EPT results for online summer advising sessions in June and July, prior to the start of Fall semester classes. This eventually led to the development of the Online EPT.

The Online EPT was the product of external policy and mandate demands and changes. This study aims to investigate the mandates that influenced the development of the Online EPT at UIUC, and how the Online EPT and the surge in the number of international undergraduate students affected stakeholders. Because of the complexity of the research context, the research methods implemented in this study are based on a “pragmatism” perspective on educational inquiry to show how practice, theory, and research findings are related and inform one another. A document audit trail was used to develop a mandate map in order to illustrate the various influences that affected the development of the Online EPT. Next, I interviewed program directors that managed
programs that offered Composition 1 courses, provided writing assistance, or advised students on Composition 1 course registration. My purpose in doing this was to investigate how their programs were influenced by the surge of international undergraduate students and implementation of the Online EPT. To examine program effectiveness and satisfaction of the EPT/ESL policies and the Online EPT, I surveyed the two main stakeholders of the EPT: undergraduate academic advisors and international undergraduate students.

It was found that the primary influences that led to the development of the Online EPT were external mandates—primarily those coming from the undergraduate advising community. During the course of the research, I found that undergraduate advisors had a major influence on the academic lives of international undergraduate students, and the advisors’ demands were the primary force behind the implementation of the Online EPT. Moreover, communication was—and still is—an area that needs improvement. Accurate communication and information transfer about students is essential for providing quality education to students. It should be understood by stakeholders that in order to provide students with the optimal educational experience, all parties involved should share information and knowledge about students.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Motivation of this research

The motivation of this dissertation comes from my experience as a teaching assistant in ESL writing courses while pursuing my master’s degree in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (MATESL) and as a research assistant for the English Placement Test (EPT) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). While working as a TA, I taught academic writing to international students and developed course materials. One of the duties outside of teaching was to work for the EPT by proctoring exams, rating essays, and advising students. When I started the Ph.D. program in 2009, I was offered the position of RA for the EPT. Because I was interested in language testing and was familiar with the details of the work, I gladly accepted the position. However, when I accepted the position, I had not expected the test to go through the changes that would occur during the past five years. I think no one involved with this test had any clue that it was going to change this much in such a relatively short period of time.

During the fall semester of 2008, there was a huge increase in the number of international undergraduate students at UIUC. This meant that the number of undergraduate EPT test-takers also increased. Prior to 2008, undergraduate EPT test-takers constituted approximately 22% of the total EPT test-takers. Suddenly, in 2008 undergraduate EPT test-takers increased to 43% of the total number. Table 1 shows the annual number of EPT test-takers from the 2006-2007 academic year to the 2014 Spring semester.
Table 1

Number of EPT Test-takers from 2006-2007 through Spring 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fall and Spring only)

Note. Each academic year includes 3 semesters: Fall, Spring, and Summer.

Due to this “surge” of undergraduate test-takers, its impact on international undergraduate students increased so significantly that the EPT experienced scrutiny from various levels of oversight. Consequently, many administrative details of the test were changed through this process. One major comment from this inquiry concerned the need for a test that newly admitted undergraduate students could take prior to their arrival on campus because undergraduate advisors needed students’ EPT results for online summer advising sessions in June and July (i.e., prior to the start of Fall semester classes). Other departments (e.g., Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry) were already offering such pre-arrival tests to newly admitted students.
This need led the EPT staff to investigate alternative methods of assessment for placing students into English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at UIUC.

The various research projects with which I was involved in eventually led to the development of the Online EPT and to the foundation of my dissertation. The EPT RA-ship could have simply been a position that required routine activities; however, due to the need for quick decision-making, adoption of new procedures, and adjustment to new policies, as well as the rollout of the online test, my duties from one semester to another never stayed the same.

This dissertation revolves around the policy shifts and mandate changes during the past five years, plus the evaluation of those policies. Now that the surge that began in 2008 seems to have stabilized at the current (Spring 2014) level, I believe it is a good time to look back on the decisions and policies that date from the surge and investigate how it affected various programs that on a daily basis deal with undergraduate international students. Because the changes to the EPT were based on administrative and advising needs, I aim to assess how this turn of events has affected various stakeholders and how these changes are impacting them.

**Research Question**

The Online EPT was the product of a combination of external policy and mandate demands and changes, and the EPT team had to create a remote test that had the same test construct, made students go through similar activities using a different delivery mode, and was cost- and time-efficient. This study aims to investigate the mandates that influenced the development of the Online EPT at UIUC and how the Online EPT and the surge in the number of international undergraduate students affected stakeholders. The development of the Online EPT was triggered by the surge of international undergraduate students at UIUC and the need to provide remote testing well before the start of the Fall semester to ensure timely placement and
advising. The focus of the dissertation concerns the written section of the English Placement test and ESL writing courses. The EPT does include an oral section that all test-takers must complete. However, because of the small number of undergraduate students that are placed into the ESL oral pronunciation course and because the oral test does not have a campus-level focus, more attention will be given to the written section of the EPT and ESL writing courses. The oral section of the EPT will be discussed from time to time whenever there is a need to focus on policy, administrative decisions, or test administration issues that pertain to it.

My research questions are:

1. What are the mandates that influenced the development of the Online English Placement Test and what types of test interventions were implemented to build the Online EPT?

2. How would program effectiveness and application of the test interventions found therein be evaluated?

2.1. Who were the affected stakeholders due to test intervention? How were they affected?

2.2. How were the ESL writing program, the undergraduate Rhetoric program, the Department of Communications, undergraduate academic advisors, and the UIUC Writers Workshop influenced by these changes?

3. How effective and accommodating are the policy changes and EPT/ESL changes to undergraduate students and advisors?

This study will evaluate the program effectiveness and applications of the Online EPT, and how accommodating the policy and administrative changes triggered by the surge have been for international undergraduate students, various UIUC programs that assist them, and undergraduate academic advisors. The programs were chosen based on their perceived assistance
to international undergraduate students in choosing their composition courses or in providing composition instruction. Through this research, I intend to provide validation evidence to supplement the EPT validation argument and contribute to the institutional placement test literature with regard to quality management and stakeholder accountability.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Test Mandate

Davidson and Lynch (2002) define the concept of mandate as the “combination of forces which help to decide what will be tested and to shape the actual content of the test” (p. 77). They claim that test mandates can be classified into two sections: internal and external mandates. Internal mandates refer to regulations or recommendations made by people who work with the test on a regular basis, such as test administrators. Changes made based on internal mandates are usually related to modifications in pedagogy or learning/teaching situations at a particular institution. External mandates refer to regulations that are not made by people who work with tests, but rather, people in higher-level school administration. Most of the time, these people are not aware of the specific details of test administration or test content. These mandates are enforced based on outside changes, such as economic conditions. The authors also point out a third kind of mandate type, which could be a mixture of internal and external mandates. Mandates are usually content-specific; thus, they should be discussed even in the initial stages of test development and should continue as test specifications evolve to ensure mutual understanding of common goals among a test development team.

In educational literature, testing mandates include important guidelines for educational reform and educational testing policies. Many studies have investigated the design and validity of U.S. state-mandated testing (e.g., Clarke, Abrams, & Madaus, 2001; Frederikson & Collins, 1989; Jacob, 2001), the degree to which educational goals have been achieved (e.g., Abedi Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004; Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001) and how the tests have influenced the behavior of teachers and students (e.g., Facella, Rampino, & Shea, 2005; Menken, 2006). As
many of these studies show, the role of testing policies in testing mandates has resulted in considerable variation in state-level tests in the United States. Examples shown in the studies demonstrate the important role of large-scaled tests in public schools in the educational experiences of students in the United States.

The growing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools has led to a series of standard-based legislations, for example, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. External mandates such as NCLB that hold schools accountable for student achievement have prompted noticeable changes in the teaching and assessment of students. English learners are also subject to these mandates and are assessed to examine their academic achievements. Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord (2004) studied the assessments for accountability purposes. Discussions have continued whether to include ELLs in large-scale, state-mandated assessment programs. Following standards-based legislation and antidiscrimination laws, ELLs were included in state assessments. This decision has led to the use of test accommodations for ELLs, and studies on these measures try to analyze the performance of ELLs. Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord (2004) found, based on a review of empirical studies on ELL test accommodations, that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to test accommodations. They argued that the needs of these learners should be considered in the test developmental process, as studies have shown that the appropriate use of test accommodations is an advantageous method for alleviating language proficiency effect on content-based, standardized achievement tests.

In other countries, such as Korea, external mandates have shaped the educational context and how students are taught in schools. Choi (2008) analyzed EFL testing in the Korean educational context by looking at standardized EFL tests. According to Choi, many standardized tests have a significant washback effect and impact how students are taught and how educational
systems are set up and operated. In particular, in Korea, where there is a high demand for English proficiency for success in areas such as business and education, EFL testing plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of people’s future career paths. For example, the English portion of the Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT) is heavily affected by the mandates set forth by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education provides recommendations and mandates that direct K-12 education in Korea. The current mandate in English education and testing in Korea is to follow the “communicative integrated skills approach” (Choi 2008, p. 41). The mandate specifies that English education in Korea should concentrate on productive skills, especially in high school classrooms. However, there is a discrepancy between the mandate and the KSAT, in that the KSAT does not reflect the communicative language learning/teaching approach. Choi explains that there is a negative washback effect in Korea because, despite the mandate to emphasize speaking and writing, the KSAT does not include those skills. Rather, there is greater emphasis on testing listening and reading. Because of the importance on reading and listening, classrooms reflect this trend. Many high school English classes, which are mandated to concentrate on production skills, are spent polishing reading and listening skills to get high scores on the KSAT.

As can be seen from the mandates regarding the use of tests and education reforms, language policies - in particular, language education policies - have a great influence on language education and language testing. According to Spolsky (2004), policy and practice cannot be seen as separate concepts; given that policy may exist within language practices. He explained that language policy is composed of three components: practice, ideology, and planning. The key element in language policy is power and the legitimacy to impose the policy through mandates. “Power” could refer to political, governmental, economic and/or
administrative power based on the context this term is used and how this power can affect related stakeholders. As Foucault (1987) wrote, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 93). Language tests can influence language learning, language use, and even the lives of test-takers.

Shohamy (2001) wrote that administrators, institutions, and testing organizations have more power than the actual test score users, the test-takers. This shows that a major role of tests is to control test-takers. Tests also have the power to enhance the status of topics and knowledge, to regulate the behavior of stakeholders, or to provide guidelines to test format and standards. Moreover, due to the unbalanced amount of information on tests between testers and test-takers, it is inevitable that tests have more power. This imbalance can lead to more authority, power, and control to testers regarding decision and policy making.

Davidson and Lynch (2002) noted that mandates can shape the design of test specifications. A test specification, or in other words, a blueprint for test design and construction, presents comprehensive descriptions and examples of test content and individual test items. Test specifications (‘specs’) go through an iterative process in order to arrive at a desired result through repeated revisions and edits. Iterations can enhance test validity as changes are made based on feedback and discussion, expert review and experience from pilot tests and/or operational use. Test specifications also reflect shifts in the mandate, whether it is internal or external. The evolution of test specifications can help improve test validity and reliability and the developments to test format and content can also help enhance test accessibility and practicality of a test.

The literatures on test mandate seems to point to a similar direction – that tests have power and it is test developers’ responsibility to consider how power can shape tests. In many
examples, test mandates are the driving force behind tests and, because of washback effects, they can also direct course of learning outcomes and goals.

**Placement tests**

In many language programs, the placement test is the first experience that students encounter when entering a program. The purpose of a placement test is to classify students into homogeneous groups based on ability levels that meet the intended goals of a program (Brown, 1989). According to Brown, many language programs use ready-made, commercially available placement tests from publishing houses, tests adapted from other language programs, or materials from textbooks. Although these are common practices in language programs, the use of commercial tests can be problematic because language programs differ in curriculum goals and teaching methods. Moreover, due to different learning experiences and linguistic backgrounds among students, the testing practices from other institutions and commercially available tests may be problematic in accurately grouping students. Because each language program or institution has unique teaching goals, many programs develop placement tests designed to align with their curricula.

Each year, many international students come from varying linguistic backgrounds to study in US universities where the language of instruction is English. In some cases, these students lack English proficiency or abilities expected at US universities, which could do much to determine their success or failure in their programs. To provide English instruction to those students, many universities offer services to help students who need assistance in the English language. Despite the fact that most universities require international students to submit scores from English proficiency exams such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and/or the Academic version of the
Pearson Tests of English Academic (PTE Academic), some institutions use in-house placement tests to place students into appropriate courses within their programs. For example, based on my internet search, out of the twelve “Big Ten” universities, eleven had in-house placement exams to place their students into English language courses.

Despite the prevalent use of placement tests in language programs, validation research in placement tests is an area that has not received much attention in the field of language testing (Fulcher, 1997; Green & Weir, 2004; Sohn & Shin, 2007; Wheritt & Cleary, 1990). According to Fulcher (1997), one of two studies was Wall, Clapham, & Alderson (1994), who investigated the validity and reliability of the institutional placement test used at the University of Lancaster and considered self-assessment as a possible tool for placement into their levels. The two main findings of this study were related to the validity and validation procedure used to study the placement test. Based on their study, face and content validity were high and students were mostly satisfied with the test. Language teachers commented that the language skills assessed in the placement test were fair representations of the skill taught in their classes, except for the listening section. The listening section had questions that asked for discrete words whereas teachers instructed students to refrain from listening for every word and focus on listening for global ideas and explicit information. Construct validity was studied by looking at correlation between subtest scores with the total scores. Grammar, reading, and listening subtest scores showed satisfactory correlations with total scores. However, the writing subtest score with total score did not reveal strong correlations. The authors suggested that the reason for the low correlation in the writing subtest could be that it was the only section that tested productive skill and therefore had lower reliability. The correlation between students’ self-assessment results and their scores on reading, writing, and listening subtest scores showed fairly low correlations but
this was not surprising considering the nature of such an assessment method. This shows that self-assessment is not a valid form of placement and this conclusion was in agreement with the one drawn from LeBlanc and Painchaud (1985), namely, that it is difficult to expect student from varying cultural backgrounds and different expectations in English for academic purposes (EAP) to provide accurate judgments about their own linguistic abilities. This study also suggests that for a placement test to provide evidence of validity, the placement test has to align with the course curriculum. The alignment is essential in showing the placement and curriculum’s congruence.

Fulcher (1997) used the methods from Wall et al. (1994) to evaluate the placement test used at the University of Surrey. He studied the reliability and validity of the placement test, and, as in the case with any institutional tests, he noted that there can be administrative limitations and restrictions due to policy decisions that can negatively impact the reliability of scores. Fulcher also emphasized the importance of item pretesting to investigate item quality. Equating test forms would also benefit the test as this would allow for evaluation across tests or test forms, which can help provide feedback to curriculum and test development.

An extensive study on college-level placement testing practices in U.S. institutions, with particular interest in Big Ten universities, investigated various test formats of placement testing for writing assessment purposes (Crusan, 2002). She looked at the final placement score from a direct writing test and correlated that final score with an indirect writing score (grammar test) to investigate various placement factors that may be used for placement purposes. Findings from her study showed that in spite of the fact that the direct essay exam and the grammar test correlated positively with the final course grade, there could be potential caveats to using the final grades as a variable. This was due to variability in the grading practices of course
The importance of accurate placement decisions from placement tests cannot be overstated because they may influence teaching and learning outcomes as well as carry financial implications (Crusan, 2002). Institutional placement tests should align with curriculum not only in content but also in terms of instructional method. In addition, an ideal placement test should consider test-takers’ feedback and meet the institutional requirements. Bradshaw (1990) recommended that test-takers’ perceptions on a test can be valuable evidence in test design and their feedback could be also included in test reports to provide different views on tests and how they can affect test-takers. On the other hand, it is also important to consider the institutional constraints and context and collaborate with other departments to provide the most suitable services possible (Ruecker, 2011). Moreover, due to changing demographics and institutional circumstances, it may be necessary for programs to conduct regular needs analyses. A near-perfect system may not be possible to build. However, through consistent observation and evaluation, a program can improve itself to better fit the needs of stakeholders within institutional constraints and bureaucracy.

**Paper-and-pencil based versus Computer-based Language Tests**

The use of technology in classrooms has prompted teachers and researchers to advance ways to implement technology for instruction and assessment. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), 97% of U.S. public school teachers reported to having one or more computers in their classrooms every day, and 69% used computers for instruction.

Computer-assisted learning has been widely used in classrooms as it can provide interactive instruction and learning in specific subject areas. With the advancement of
sophisticated and accessible learning and teaching applications, educational institutions and program developers have developed online tutorials or simulated activities. These online learning tools have become an important teaching modality. With the wide use of technology in schools, educational institutions have begun implementing computerized exams and application of technology to student assessment. While pencil-and-paper or paper-based tests still remain as the “standard” form of assessment, many supporters of computerized assessment argue that computerized assessments are more in line with up-to-date methodology used in classrooms.

As technology has influenced teaching and learning, the use of technology has provided test developers the opportunity to enhance productivity, accessibility, and innovation. The computerized form has led to more standardized testing conditions for all test-takers and allowed testers to create randomized questions and answers from a pool of questions and provide immediate feedback and score reports.

In language assessment, major attempts to develop computer-based language tests began in the 1980s, at the Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) in 1985. At LTRC 1985, there were several papers presented on the topic of computer-based testing (CBT) and computer-adaptive testing (CAT) (Stansfield, 1986).

There is a lag in research regarding the implementation of CBTs and, in particular, computer-adaptive testing (CAT), in the field of language assessment by about ten years when compared to general educational measurement. This discrepancy can be explained by the widespread practice of performance-based assessment in language testing (Chalhoub-Deville, 2001). According to Chalhoub-Deville, while educational measurement researchers have focused on selected-response item formats, language assessment researchers continue to use performance-based assessment which is difficult to computerize.
Chalhoub-Deville and Deville (1999) argued that there are only a limited number of studies that have investigated score comparability of open-ended types of items, and that localized comparability studies should be conducted to identify a test delivery mode effect due to the conversion of test mode. The main objectives of comparability and equivalence studies should help decide whether CBTs can be used in place of or in concurrence with their paper-based testing (PBT) counterparts. There have been many studies since 1999 when this article was published regarding computer-based language tests, however, not many studies have focused on computerization of institutional language tests, particularly in performance-based tests.

Likewise, according to Winke and Fei (2008), in studies in educational measurement, early computerized foreign language tests contained items that could be analyzed easily with computers, such as multiple-choice and short-answer type questions. These computerized tests were usually direct translations of identical test items from paper-and-pencil tests. However, recently, more test developers have parted from discrete-item type tests and have started developing tests with open-ended response type items and real-world, task-based tasks. This expansion in research scope in PBT and CBT comparability studies could reflect the trend that computers have become so apparent and important in educational contexts - not merely in language teaching and assessment, but in all other aspects of education.

The field of language testing, as is the case with research in general educational measurement, has looked into PBT and CBT score comparability in multiple-choice items and in how different test-taker characteristics can influence test scores and performance. Because performance tests are widely used in language testing, test-taker performance on those tests, with special interest in writing assessment, can be influenced by computer familiarity and how raters can behave differently depending on test delivery mode.
Wolfe and Manalo (2004) compared the paper-and-pencil and computer-based scores on the writing section of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). More specifically, the authors investigated the overall English proficiency of test-takers in other sections of the TOEFL (MC sections) with their scores from the writing section (both computer-based and paper-and-pencil formats). The aim of the study was to discover whether there are any differences in the scores on essays based on test-delivery formats and to find out if other variables (e.g., age, gender) could influence writing performance. The authors used a sample of 133,906 TOEFL test-takers who had completed the test-taker background information questionnaire and the entire TOEFL test. Test-takers came from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (200 countries and 11 different languages), and most of the test-takers said that they were taking the TOEFL to pursue an academic degree. Researchers found that there were statistically significant differences in the multiple choice scores in test-takers of a particular delivery medium. But in their essay scores the difference was small. Test-takers with higher English proficiency did not show differences in the writing section scores regardless of composition media whereas test-takers with lower proficiency performed better on the paper-and-pencil writing format. The authors found only a small difference in essay scores based on varying delivery formats. However, there was interaction when test-takers’ English proficiency (e.g. multiple choice scores) was taken into consideration. Test-takers’ demographic data did not influence scores on either format regarding the essays.

Findings from Wolfe and Manalo (2004) correspond with recent findings in computerized writing assessment that show no significant differences in the mean scores of test-takers between online and paper writing tasks. In some studies, test-takers performed better on the computerized writing test when compared to the paper version of the test. For example, a
comparability study of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that the essays produced on computers differed depending on a test-taker’s experience in writing using computers (Horkay, Bennett, Allen, Kaplan, & Yan, 2006). Horkay et al. (2006) suggested that writing performance depends significantly on an individual writer’s personal preference of writing tool, whether paper or computer, so if a test is conducted using a writing tool that the writer is less familiar with, the test may negatively affect the performance of that writer.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation is an important reflective activity for improvement and determination of the value of a policy or strategy. The basic definition of evaluation research is a systematic investigation to determine the worth or merit of a specific program or project (Davidson, 2005). From a more social science research stance, Rossi, Freeman, and Lipsey (2004) define program evaluation as the following:

Program evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social interaction programs to improve social conditions. (p. 18)

In the field of education, decisions are made based on data-driven information. Data-informed decisions help educational programs and schools review their conventions and identify areas in need of development. Through this assessment, programs can create strategies for advancement of educational quality for stakeholders (Romero & Ventura, 2007).

Greene (2004) argued that program evaluation should be determined by how the gathered information would be interpreted by those that will use the product of the evaluation. A good evaluation should have a set of criteria that evaluators can cover to collect valid conclusions and evaluators should clearly identify the background and context of the program (Davidson, 2005). Once data is collected, information could be used to support and improve the program for all
identified stakeholders. This information gathering would also provide evidence that can be used by decision makers (Janesick, 2006). Janesick (2006) wrote, “evaluation is about placing a value on something and thoroughly describing the steps taken throughout the evaluation process” (p. 367). This shows that regardless of the definition of program evaluation that is used, the purpose of program evaluation should be clearly defined and understood by all evaluators. Concurrently, the evaluators’ role is to draw out and provide information for data-driven decisions. This will help information users interpret the information to deduce a program’s value and validity.

To draw out the most relevant data to evaluate the program, researchers must select the optimal data collection method. When considering data collection methods, once should also consider the amount of data that is already available and how much information is being collected on a regular basis.

In language programs, program evaluation is a way to investigate accountability and program importance. Program evaluation also helps organizations demonstrate how their programs are meeting the mandates (Davis, 2012). Language programs can use assessment to provide evidence of their value to participants of the program, or stakeholders, to support program effectiveness. Findings from language program evaluation are used primarily for accountability purposes (Norris, 2006). In language program evaluation, evidence from language assessment provides information on areas of quality control and improvement. This use of assessment in language program evaluation context can relate to the notion of validity in educational measurement because assessment results can provide empirical evidence to support score use or decisions made based on those test scores. Validity relates to test stakeholders being able to critically consider social consequences of test score use and evaluate the potential influence of decisions made based on test results.
Validity is a central principle in language testing. Validity theory has evolved and the most significant work on validity has been Messick’s (1989) work. Messick described the dimension of validity and how his unified view of validity provides evidence of function and value of the assessment. He led field of educational measurement to study the construct-driven approach to test validation and think about social practice in relation to language testing. A major contribution of Messick was his unified model of validity, which considered value and social consequences of test use and interpretation in the validity argument. Messick explained that validity is “an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores or other modes of assessment” (Messick, 1989, p. 13). The concept of validity in terms of its consideration of social consequences and value can be related to program evaluation in that program evaluation also investigates the object of the evaluation’s value and influence.

**Stakeholders**

For a program evaluation to be successful in providing useful information to the users of the findings, researchers should identify the rationale and purpose of the evaluation and the consequences of the results. To do so, researchers need to develop a clear evaluation plan that supports the evaluation rationale and purpose. It is important to explain the object of the evaluation, provide a program logic model, recognize the evaluation’s stakeholders, and decide the main evaluation questions (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009).

When creating an evaluation plan, it is important for researchers to be responsible for depicting the experiences of participants of the program to show the complexity and uniqueness of the program and how it affects participants. These participants of the program are called stakeholders (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009).
In a broader context, stakeholders are “those who make decisions and those who are affected by those decisions” (Rea-Dickins, 1997). According to Rea-Dickins (1997), some stakeholders may be more powerful compared to others. More powerful stakeholders are usually decision makers whereas less important ones are usually groups affected by the decisions. For findings from a program evaluation to be useful, researchers should clearly outline the stakeholders in the program and their roles in the organizations to provide supporting evidence relevant to the important evaluation objectives.

Consideration of stakeholders in testing can improve the reception or approval of the test by enhancing validity. Kane (2006) explains the important role of stakeholders by stating that “any consequences that are considered significant by stakeholders are potentially relevant to the evaluation of how well a decision procedure is working” (Kane, 2006, p. 56). When suggesting his assessment use argument in practical test design, development and use, Bachman (2005) proposes a framework to integrate test scores, interpretation, and uses. In doing so, he explains language test development as a multifaceted and technical activity that often requires awareness of social contexts in which the test will be used. Due to varying sociocultural understanding, different stakeholders that are affected by tests are likely to perceive test scores, score interpretation, and use in their own ways and logical arguments can provide useful collection of evidence for that specific assessment context. Arguments can help test developers be accountable to the stakeholders.

Furthermore, inclusion of stakeholders in the test development process and communication and collaboration with them can improve tests, contribute to new advances, and promote positive washback (Hughes, 1989; Saif, 2006; Shohamy, 1992; Wall, 1996). Therefore, stakeholder involvement in program evaluation provides potential for opportunity to learn more
about the program, organization, and evaluation. Moreover, the inclusion of stakeholder can help them take ownership of the evaluation process and by using the knowledge of stakeholders, evaluators can get more relevant evidence that can lead to more valid findings.

**Quality Management (QM)**

Program evaluation is defined as assessing the worth or value of something (Scriven, 1967). Program evaluation is a process of investigation with specific objectives through professional judgment. Simply put, program evaluation is identification, clarification, and implementation of criteria to judge the program’s worth, quality, effectiveness, and significance. Quality management (QM) possess many characteristics of program evaluation and because QM focuses on quality of a product as well as consistency, QM may be a more applicable theory for ensuring consistency and control of processes in language testing, which are also related to principles of test development. According to Saville (2012), QM can help language testers reach quality standards, which can help maintain consistency of managerial practices and ensure that assessment cycles are mistake-free, as mistakes could threaten validity. Therefore, quality management and assurance practices can eliminate construct-irrelevant variance and monitor and improve standards.

The primary goal of QM is to ensure that a product or organization can be maintained and controlled for consistency. QM deals not only with the outcome of a product or service but also the process used for achieving quality. In language testing, quality management refers to controlling consistency in test development, test administration, and managerial processes (Saville, 2012). During an iterative process of test development, test developers should monitor the link between theory and practice related to test purposes and validity. This process relates to QM because practicality is an important consideration in maintaining test quality. Saville
claimed that in QM, institutional constraints and other practical concerns should be considered, because practicality is an important factor in test quality and usability. Evidence to support the validity of a test should include practical matters such as whether the test follows a set of consistent test procedures. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) wrote, “Any non-standard practice in the administration of testing is a potential threat to validity” (p. 116). Inconsistency is likely to be a threat to test validity as well as quality.

QM should also be an important consideration during the test development process. The development of a test specification is an iterative process that is generated over time to represent the guidelines of test tasks. A good test specification should provide information on test item development, operation, and maintenance (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). These elements all factor into QM. As each test is different due to varying organizational objectives and test goals, document tracking, record keeping, communicating, staff recruiting, training, and evaluating, and monitoring of the assessment cycle should be constantly reviewed and evaluated to ensure QM. For example, members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) assessed their tests against the QM requirements established in the Code of Practice (ALTE, n.d.) to make sure that their “standards continue to rise and the requirements of the ‘customers’ for the exams can always be met” (Van Avermaet, Kuijper, & Saville, 2004). The QM approach in this study followed a process of activities that included identification of stakeholders, self-assessment, and monitoring. Self-awareness was a central step in standard setting and quality improvement as identification of their strengths and weaknesses is the first step in establishing goals and practice models. The linking of theoretical principles and practical concerns was a necessary step in continuing the process of improvement. The QM process could also be a tool for raising standards and providing evidence to support test validity and reliability.
Quality management (QM) can help test developers enhance their tests by monitoring whether standards are being met. These standards can be developed through thorough discussions among the test development team regarding the process of test development and administration and the context and purpose of the test being administered. Many times, in a language test QM system, standards are derived through self-monitoring and self-awareness in an organization. Code of Practice and Minimum Standards provided by ALTE (The Association of Language Testers in Europe, http://www.alte.org/) and Guidelines for Practice and Code of Ethics presented by ILTA (International Language Testing Association, http://www.ildaonline.com/), can provide organizations with guidelines on how they can develop a QM checklist to fit their own tests. In addition, by maintaining and improving the quality of a test, test developers are setting out a public position on how they are trying to provide stakeholders with necessary information regarding their test quality and efforts to improve the quality of their tests (Saville, 2005).

It is the professional principle of the test developer to recognize the role and mission of the institution, self-evaluate, identify areas of improvement, suggest plans to improve the measure, perform the plans, and review the plans. Different tests have different goals and are used in different contexts, so there is no one-size-fits-all standard to QM. According to Saville (2005), a QM approach can allow test developers:

- to enhance the quality of their examinations in the perspective of fairness for the candidates,
- to engage in negotiations with their senior management and sponsors in a process of organizational change, (e.g. to ensure that resources are made available to support on-going improvements).
• to move from self-evaluation to the possibility of external verification in order to set agree and acceptable standards. (p. 4)

The QM approach can work in a variety of contexts because the process of setting, monitoring, and maintaining standard begins through self-evaluation. By considering the various codes of practice and ethics in language testing presented by language testing scholars and practitioners, testing professionals can enhance the quality of their tests through consistent reflection and self-awareness.
CHAPTER III

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Increase in the number of international students

The international student population in US higher education is more culturally diverse than ever (Keller, 2001). The number of international students is on the rise in US higher education institutions. It was reported that 61% of US higher education institutions saw an increase in the number of international students during the fall semester of 2012 when compared to the previous fall (Institute of International Education, 2012). Moreover, 56% of institutions in the survey responded that there was an increase in the number of newly admitted international students. This increase is due to active student recruitment and the positive reputation of US colleges abroad. The increase in the number of international students is due to a significant growth in students from Asia, mainly the People’s Republic of China. To meet the needs of this culturally diverse population, many campuses have responded that they are increasing the scope of their ESL programs and providing more student support services.

This increase in the number of undergraduate international students is also apparent at UIUC. Table 2 shows the number of incoming freshmen during Fall semesters from 2006 until 2013. The percentage of international students showed a sharp growth in the Fall 2008 and the percentage of international freshmen seems to have stabilized at around 13% since Fall 2010.
Table 2

**Number of Incoming Freshmen in Fall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>6822</td>
<td>6516</td>
<td>6585</td>
<td>6278</td>
<td>6031</td>
<td>6297</td>
<td>6062</td>
<td>6174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int’l</strong></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7172</td>
<td>6949</td>
<td>7299</td>
<td>6991</td>
<td>6936</td>
<td>7255</td>
<td>6933</td>
<td>7331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data developed from the *Division of Management Information at UIUC*. 
As the 2012 report from Institute of International Education has shown, the number of freshmen from China has been on the rise since 2006. Figure 1 shows the number of UIUC freshmen international students each Fall semester from 2006 to 2013 by home country. The figure shows the three countries outside the U.S. that sent the most number of students to UIUC. In Fall 2006, China was not in the top three countries, but beginning Fall 2009, it was sending the largest number of freshmen to UIUC.

![Bar chart showing the number of UIUC freshmen international students each Fall semester from 2006 to 2013 by home country. The chart shows the three countries outside the U.S. that sent the most number of students to UIUC. In Fall 2006, China was not in the top three countries, but beginning Fall 2009, it was sending the largest number of freshmen to UIUC.]

This surge in international freshmen resulted in an increase of the total number of test-takers in the EPT (see Table 1).
The UIUC English Placement Test – On-campus Test

An institutional placement test is designed to align with the course goal of that institution. At UIUC, the English Placement Test (EPT) is the initial test that students take to become placed into appropriate writing and/or pronunciation courses. The EPT is used to assess the English ability of newly admitted international students as validated against the English language demands of our campus. UIUC offers ESL writing and oral pronunciation service courses to international undergraduate and graduate students who were admitted on a limited status based on their scores on standardized English proficiency tests (TOEFL or IELTS) and/or other relevant information in each student’s admission dossier. Students admitted on limited admission status are required to take the EPT upon arrival at the University.

According to Davidson and Cho (2001), the beginning of academic English testing at UIUC dates to 1907. As a separate test, the EPT took its initial form in the 1950s when the UIUC ESL program used the Michigan tests as its assessment instrument. It was not until the mid-1950s that UIUC ESL faculty wrote ESL placement tests that were modeled after the Michigan test. This stage is referred to as the first era of the EPT. During this period, the EPT was under the influence of the then-dominant structuralist model of language. The first era EPT included a multiple-choice grammar section and a timed essay which was graded primarily based on grammar and organization.

The second era was developed based on the language teaching paradigm of communicative competence during the late 1970s when Professor Lyle Bachman was the supervisor of the EPT at UIUC. The test developed by Bachman was composed of a structure test, cloze test, and dictation. The writing task in the first era was replaced by the cloze and dictation tasks because the latter two tasks had better psychometric quality.
The third and current era reintroduced the essay exam after Professor Fred Davidson began oversight of the EPT in 1990. During this era, detailed test specifications were developed to control test items and tasks. In addition, test specifications were used as blue prints for item development and test quality control and were released for public viewing. The third era of EPT has gone through many versions: Regular EPT, Enhanced EPT, Semi-Enhanced EPT, and Online EPT. All four versions were developed through detailed test specifications based on the criterion-referenced-based test specification format (Popham, 1978) and principles of test specification developed by Davidson and Lynch (2002).

The EPT assesses students on two major skills: academic writing and oral pronunciation. The EPT written exam is designed to resemble a workshop-based ESL writing class and encourages students to follow the conventions process-oriented writing assessment. The test is based on the work by Cho (2001) who proposed the use of various pre-writing and revision tasks that could facilitate ESL learners throughout the writing process. This model of writing assessment, which is also referred to as the Enhanced EPT (E-EPT), may be contrary to a conventional large-scale writing assessment that uses a timed, single draft model. The E-EPT combined the oral interview with the workshop-based essay test. In the workshop-based essay test, test-takers are provided with a variety of aids. The E-EPT was a full-day test and it was difficult to get test-takers for a full day during the week before the start of instruction which was when the test was administered. Therefore, the E-EPT was shortened to the Semi-Enhanced EPT (SE-EPT). This version is the current operational format for the on-campus EPT. In SE-EPT, the written exam takes approximately four hours to complete and carries test-takers through a series of activities. Table 3 shows the procedure of the SE-EPT written exam.
### Table 3

**SE-EPT Written Exam Procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:10 AM</td>
<td><strong>Check In</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20 AM</td>
<td><strong>Explanation of EPT Procedure and Topic Introduction</strong></td>
<td>(5-10 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher explains the test process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td><strong>Article Reading</strong></td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note taking allowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50 AM</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lecture and Group Discussion</strong></td>
<td>(30 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20 AM</td>
<td><strong>Explanation of Scoring Rubric</strong></td>
<td>(5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher explains the scoring criteria to help students’ in writing their essays.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:25 AM</td>
<td><strong>First Writing Task</strong></td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A guideline is provided. Students will outline their essays based on the guideline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 AM</td>
<td><strong>Peer Review and Q/A with Teacher</strong></td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion questions are provided. The teacher forms groups. Students will read other students’ first drafts and make suggestions for improvement based on discussion questions provided by the teacher. Students may also ask questions to the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05 AM</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td>(5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10 AM</td>
<td><strong>Write the essay</strong></td>
<td>(60 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:10 AM</td>
<td><strong>Finish written exam</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of the written exam is to assess students on their ability to produce an academic essay based on information gathered from a reading passage and a short lecture. In the reading passage and short lecture, students are provided with information that they may use as supporting evidence in their essays. The group discussion (#4 in Table 3) and the peer review (#7 in Table 3) activities are interactive, in that students may hold discussions with other test-takers.
and the teacher to receive feedback and ask questions about the content of the exam. Students also receive supplementary guidelines so they are aware of the goals and procedure of the activities. The final outcome of the written exam is an argumentative essay on a given topic. The essays are graded blindly by three trained raters. (The benchmark for the EPT written exam scoring is provided in APPENDIX A: BENCHMARK FOR THE EPT WRITTEN EXAM.)

Although the focus of this research is on the written exam, it is necessary to describe the EPT Oral Interview (OI) as well. The purpose of the EPT OI is to identify students who need formal instruction in pronunciation (ESL 110/510 at UIUC). It is a targeted, one-on-one interview that focuses on assessing the intelligibility of pronunciation. The OI is administered immediately after the completion of the written exam. It places students into three different categories: exemption, recommendation, and requirement (or highly recommended for undergraduate students). This interview consists of an initial global interview, referred to as OI-phase I and, if necessary, a specific pronunciation assessment, OI-phase II. Both OI-phase I and II are conducted by a single rater. Based on the initial global interview, if the student does not have any problem communicating with intelligible words, then the student is assigned to a score of 5, which means that the student is exempted from oral pronunciation coursework. However, if the student demonstrates significant difficulty producing intelligible words, the student is given a score of 1, which means that he or she is required to take ESL 510 (for graduate students) or highly recommended to take ESL 110 (for undergraduate students). For students that receive a score of 1 or 5, OI-phase I is the end of the EPT interview. In other cases where the student is mostly intelligible but says some or many words unclearly because of mispronunciation, the rater proceeds to OI-phase II. In OI-phase II, the student is asked to read sentences from the OI-phase II packet and is instructed to read the sentences twice as smoothly and naturally as he/she can.
While the student is reading the sentences, the rater evaluates whether the student pronounces the targeted sounds correctly on the interview sheet. The student is evaluated on his/her ability to accurately pronounce based on the following constructs: segmental, rhythm, word stress, primary phrase stress, and construction stress. The mispronounced target sounds are tallied and the OI level is determined based on the total number of mispronunciations. (The rating scale for the EPT OI is in APPENDIX B: RATING SCALE FOR THE EPT ORAL INTERVIEW.) The written and oral sections of the SEEPT are administered on the same day, and the scores from both sections are available to students by or before two business days after the test is taken by an individual.

The undergraduate surge in international student enrollment at UIUC in 2008 led to the development of the Online EPT. Due to the increased number of undergraduate students, there was a growing need from undergraduate academic advisors to have the results of the EPT early, preferably during the summer months before the start of Fall semesters. Because the EPT was affecting an increasing number of stakeholders, the EPT office had to adjust to the growing needs and mandates of UIUC. Therefore, the Online EPT was developed. The Online EPT requires test-takers to gather information from a reading text and a video lecture to write an argumentative essay. There is also the Oral Phase I section, in which students are required to record a three-minute monologue based on a given question or questions; if an online test-taker is required to do the face-to-face Phase II, it is scheduled after the test-taker arrives on campus. Test-takers are required to take both sections of the Online EPT at a location of their own choosing within a specific 48-hour test window. The Online EPT launched in May 2012 for Fall 2012 undergraduate intake.

1 For large test administrations, the OI-phase I is conducted in the morning, before the start of the written exam. Moving phase I to the morning is an option, albeit rarely used.
The UIUC English Placement Test – Online Test

The Online EPT was offered only to undergraduate students. The decision to provide the Online EPT solely to undergraduate students was due to differences in ESL writing course placement between undergraduate and graduate students. For undergraduate students, the completion of the ESL writing course sequence (either the ESL 111 and 112 or ESL 115 sequence\(^2\)) fulfills the Composition 1 requirement – meaning that no undergraduate student will receive an EPT placement of “exemption” for writing. Even if an undergraduate student is misplaced and receives the highest level in writing, the student must take one ESL writing course, ESL 115, to fulfill the Composition 1 requirement. Graduate students can be placed into one of the three possible placement levels: ESL 500 and 501 sequence (level 1 and 2), ESL 501 (level 3), and exempt (level 4). In other words, if a graduate student receives the highest level (level 4) in the written exam, the student can be completely exempted from the ESL writing course requirement. This means for graduate students, that there is no way to provide English language services in case of misplacement. We believed that due to the possibility of exemption, graduate students could have more motivation to cheat or commit test fraud, hence, there could be more attempts of cheating and breach of test security among the graduate test-takers. Therefore, for test security reasons, the decision was made to offer this option solely to undergraduate students.

The online test is delivered via Moodle, which is used in many higher educational institutions for creating effective online learning sites. For the Online EPT, Moodle was chosen as the test interface because UIUC offers instructors technical support. A major benefit of using any such Learning Management System (LMS) is that it provides a ready-made “template-based” system through which instructors can embed instructional or assessment content. Creating a test

\(^2\) This was the ESL 113, 114, 115 sequence which was in effect until Summer 2013.
through an LMS is relatively simpler to enact than creating an online website from scratch because LMS does not require full knowledge of Web design or HTML. Also, it is relatively easy to use due to its flexibility. For example, Moodle can be used in any operating system (e.g. Windows, Mac OS, Unix, Linux) without restrictions as long as it can run PHP (HTML-embedded scripting language) (Brandl, 2005).

In the Online EPT, test-takers take the written exam and Phase I of the oral interview. Because Moodle is asynchronous and Phase II which requires interaction between interviewer and interviewee, it was decided that Phase II would be conducted on-campus only to test-takers that receive the placement of “continuing” from Phase I. Based on test-taker data from Fall 2011 on-campus EPTs, approximately 72% of the test-takers who took the Oral EPT Phase I were not required to take Phase II. Because of the small percentage of test-takers who move on to Phase II and an even smaller percentage (5% of all test-takers in Fall 2011) of test takers who are required to take the ESL oral pronunciation course after taking Phase II, it is expected that conducting the Oral EPT Phase II solely on campus will not affect course selection and registration for most test takers. Phase I of the Online EPT is designed to identify students who need remedial pronunciation instruction. Only Phase I is administered online for two main reasons. First, currently (Spring 2014), there is no viable means through which test content can be released to online test-takers in a secure manner. The second reason is because of the small number of test-takers that go on to take Phase II based on their performance on Phase I. Test-takers may complete the online Oral EPT Phase I anytime within their 48-hour test window. In this phase, test-takers are given a question and asked to provide a three-minute response. They are given six minutes after accessing their test question to complete this task. The same rating guidelines given for the on campus interview are used for the online Phase I evaluations.
The Online EPT is offered during regular timeframes called “test windows.” Test windows are a 48-hour time period during which test takers can complete their EPT. The 48-hour time period was set to accommodate the different time zones of test-takers. In Fall 2012, eleven online tests were offered, one per week, starting at noon Monday until noon Wednesday, US Central time. Students wanting to take the test after the 11th online session could take the on-campus test. Score turnaround was based on the same timeline as the on-campus test (same day as the test session), with the stipulation that test administrators might need an extra day (after each window) for raters to assess EPT submissions. In Fall 2013, ten online tests were offered, following the same timeline as Fall 2012 Online EPT.

The written exam of the Online EPT attempted to simulate the workshop-based model of the Semi-Enhanced On-campus EPT. The objective of the written exam is the same as the on-campus version. The expected response attribute of the online written exam is also the same as the On-campus EPT, as students are required to compose an argumentative essay using the information from the reading article and the video lecture as supporting evidence. Table 4 below shows the specific procedure of the Online EPT.
### Specific procedure of the Online EPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Grouping</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test grouping</td>
<td>Provide login instructions and information</td>
<td>When they register for the EPT</td>
<td>The registration email students receive when they register for the EPT will contain information on the Online EPT website, enrollment key for the registered test window, and technical requirements. The enrollment key is generated by ATLAS or the EPT RA.</td>
<td>Email (From registration site)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pre-test grouping | Check technical requirements | Before a student’s test | Students will be asked to enroll in the Online EPT website prior to the start of the test window. When they enroll, they will receive a list of things to check prior to taking the test. The list begins contains the following information:  
- Install Firefox (recommended by ATLAS) | Moodle Testing site |
Table 4 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Grouping</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Check JAVA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Check audio (audio activity provided in Moodle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Check video (video activity provided in Moodle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Check audio recorder (For Oral task; For Fall 2012, Wimba was used. For Fall 2013, CLEAR was used.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test grouping</td>
<td>Explanation of Online EPT and Topic Introduction</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>The introduction video explains the test process and introduces the topic.</td>
<td>Moodle Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test grouping</td>
<td>Article Reading</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Students read a reading text (Allow note taking)</td>
<td>Moodle Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Grouping</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test</td>
<td>Mini Lecture</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>The lecture (video) provides students with information on the topic and allows for discussion. (Allow note taking) Students can watch the lecture once.</td>
<td>Moodle Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test</td>
<td>Discussion Forum</td>
<td>Available for 48 hours</td>
<td>There will be 3-4 basic questions provided. Students can participate in the forum by responding to the provided questions or adding other questions to develop the discussion.</td>
<td>Moodle Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Grouping</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active test group</td>
<td>Explanation of Scoring Rubric</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>The video explains the scoring criteria to help students’ essay writing. This step can be helpful to students when setting strategies for the writing tasks. The video also explains the UIUC Student Code on academic integrity and clarifies the consequences of academic dishonesty. After students watch the video, they will read an Academic Integrity Agreement Form and will be asked to check that they agree to the content of the form.</td>
<td>Moodle Video (Academic integrity Information and scoring rubric video) Moodle Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Grouping</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test</td>
<td>Writing Task</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>Students write the essay based on the information provided in the article and lecture. Students are provided with the article, an essay outline worksheet, and revision questions for assistance with writing the final essay. Students have one attempt to write the essay. Once students submit the essay, they cannot revise it.</td>
<td>Moodle Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active test</td>
<td>Oral Phase I</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Students get one attempt to record their answers to a given question. Students can record their answers anytime within the 48-hour test window.</td>
<td>Moodle Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Activity is available for 48 hours.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Grouping</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Check scores</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students get instructions on checking and interpreting scores.</td>
<td>Moodle test site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The major difference between the Online and the On-campus EPT is the Discussion Forum. In order to create an online environment in which students could interact with one another, an online discussion forum in Moodle was offered to students. In the On-campus EPT, students are asked to participate in a live discussion, so in order to provide a similar environment in the online test, an online forum was set up. Another difference is that rather than separating the first writing task, peer review, and final draft task, the Online EPT writing task is 90 minutes in total and asks students to use the outline worksheet and revision questions to help them write their final drafts. In addition, to discourage students from committing academic dishonesty, the Online EPT has an Academic Integrity activity in a video format that clarifies the consequences of academic dishonesty.

The Online EPT also provides various videos that explain the procedure of the test. The EPT introduction video explains each task briefly, in order; explains the goal of the test; and introduces the topic. At the beginning of each activity of the test, an introduction video gives an overview of the activity and how to use Moodle to complete the task. Each video demonstrates the activity step-by-step.

**Conclusion**

This study will attempt to study the effectiveness and application of the Online EPT and investigate how different sectors of UIUC that serve international undergraduate students are working to meet the needs of this growing population. I intend to provide validation evidence to support the EPT and provide recommendations to institutional placement tests with regard to quality management and stakeholder accountability.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This study implemented a mixed methods approach to investigate the various mandates that have affected the development of the Online EPT. By using a mix of varying research methods, the findings can illustrate the complexity of the situation and offer different explanations. Through this triangulated design, I looked into how the mandates of undergraduate students influenced various stakeholders that have regular contact with undergraduate international students. Moreover, I evaluated the effectiveness of policies that were implemented in relation to international undergraduate students’ Composition 1 requirements at UIUC and explored what stakeholders believe about those changes.

Research Questions

The purpose of this quality management evaluation is to inform the improvement of the EPT. The emphasis of this study is to produce assessment findings that are meaningful to the program’s stakeholders and related administrators. This study aims to provide information to improve the test by identifying areas of strengths and areas in need of development. I reviewed and synthesized data and interviews with stakeholders to find useful information that can stimulate further development and improvement in the future. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the mandates that influenced the development of the Online English Placement Test and what types of test interventions were implemented to build the Online EPT?

2. How would program effectiveness and application of the test interventions found therein be evaluated?

2.1. Who were the affected stakeholders due to test intervention? How were they affected?
2.2. How were the ESL writing program, the undergraduate Rhetoric program, the Department of Communications, undergraduate academic advisors, and the UIUC Writers Workshop influenced by these changes?

3. How effective and accommodating are the policy changes and EPT/ESL changes to undergraduate students and advisors?

Given the nature of this research, which required iterative processes in which the design and findings of all research stages interact and supplement one another throughout the inquiry, it was critical to find an appropriate evidence-based practice. A contextual and practical understanding of the research setting was necessary to recognize the importance of the research goal and the elements that influenced the selection of research methods. The research methods implemented in this study are based on a “pragmatism” perspective on educational inquiry, in that an interconnected understanding of practice and theory are not separated but rather, complementary, as one informs the other (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

The reason behind this mixed methods approach is to better understand the research context of mandate-driven test development. In order to fully understand the courses of action and decision-making processes that were necessary to develop the test, it is important to include the thoughts of different stakeholders in the educational context. The combination of policy shifts and mandates and practical considerations associated with the development of Online EPT was complex, making it difficult to investigate the procedure with just one method. The use of quantitative and qualitative inquiries is necessary to understand this multifaceted situation. I believe that the various methods used in this research will complement one another, as each method has its own strengths and weaknesses.
This study integrated different methods, and the findings from each question may be used to interact with one another throughout the research process. The analysis of results and inferences that can be made from the evidence can be used to supplement other phases of the research. Table 5 outlines the major research activities that were performed from March 2013 to November 2013.

Table 5

*Overview of Research Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March - May 2013</td>
<td>Research planning</td>
<td>Generate survey questions for the pilot surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Generate program director interview questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan research scope for the mandate map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>Pilot surveys</td>
<td>Distribute student and advisor pilot surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase validity and reliability of the surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check response patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September - October 2013</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Conduct interviews with program directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore characteristics of the program and how they responded to the surge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September - November 2013</td>
<td>Main student survey</td>
<td>Distribute the main student survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate effectiveness of the Online EPT and related policy changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - November 2013</td>
<td>Main advisor survey</td>
<td>Distribute the main advisor survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Examine how effective and accommodating the Online EPT and policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EPT and policy change have been to academic advisors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1

When investigating the systematic quality of programs, the first step was to understand and examine the research context and how different program elements interrelate with one another (Grayson, 2012). For educational evaluation to be meaningful, it was important to know the characteristics and intention of the program.

To investigate the first research question and establish the test development context, I implemented a document audit trail procedure to form a chronological path of mandates, interventions, and events that led to the development of the Online EPT. I reviewed various meeting notes to analyze the application of new test administration systems, policy shifts, introduction of new policies, and other relevant campus- and department- level decisions. I also tracked the changes in the EPT test specification and EPT administrative concerns including, but not limited to, changes in the test administration process, revisions to the test procedure, and changes in staff responsibilities. This procedure included analyses of changes in EPT test-taker demographic information, placement rates, and other EPT-related test data. The intended outcome of this test document audit trail is an analytical tool that I call the mandate map. As discussed earlier, mandate is the “combination of forces which help to decide what will be tested and to shape the actual content of the test” (Davidson & Lynch, 2002, p. 77). The purpose of the chronological map of the different mandates was to illustrate the test development process and the many decisions and policies that have influenced the development of the Online EPT. The outcome of the audit trail provides information on the chronological changes in test administration, demographics, placement rates, staff training, management concerns, test policy shifts, and other test-related concerns. In addition, the findings from this research phase set the stage for the next question, in which I would need to identify the various test stakeholders and
assess how the mandates affected those persons. Another purpose of this stage was to provide a more comprehensive and contextual background for the research setting, the English Placement Test and in part, the ESL writing service courses program.

Research Question 2

The second research question was to evaluate the program effectiveness of the online test for programs that provide writing assistance to ESL populations and to clarify the participants or stakeholders of the research context. Furthermore, this stage was designed to study the relationships between external mandates and various program activities. In order to examine how the test interventions and the surge of international undergraduate students have influenced various programs that serve international students, I conducted interviews with directors of programs that provide writing assistance and writing course registration to international undergraduate students. It was important to conduct interviews to better understand the interviewees’ world and experiences in this particular institution, as institutional research is context bound. I chose to interview four different programs that are related to providing course registration processes and/or writing assistance: the ESL writing program, the undergraduate advising community, the Rhetoric Program, and the Writers Workshop. In the initial research proposal, I had planned to interview the EPT program supervisor, but because of my extensive work in the Online EPT test development process, I decided not to interview the EPT program supervisor. The narrative explanation of the mandate map explains in detail the context of the changes of the EPT. The EPT program supervisor was consulted during the process of developing the mandate map.
Stakeholders are individuals involved in the interests of organizations, systems, and the decision-making process of a program or project (Fassin, 2009). The purpose of the interviews with stakeholders was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meaning behind the policy and testing changes from professionals who have extensive experience in the field.

To investigate the ESL writing program, interviews with those familiar with the program would be the most appropriate. I interviewed the director of ESL programs to explore the characteristics of the ESL program, program goals, changes in the curriculum (if any) and other related issues in that program that may have appeared during the process of adjusting to growth in the program. I focused on changes in the ESL writing program in terms of growth in the number of students, and staff and curriculum development.

Other programs that could have been affected by the growth in the undergraduate international population were the Undergraduate Rhetoric Program (RHET) in the Department of English and the Department of Communications (CMN) at UIUC. RHET and CMN offer courses that fulfill the Composition I and Advanced Composition requirements for undergraduate students. The Composition I requirement must be fulfilled by all incoming undergraduate students. Because of the increase in the number of international undergraduate students, the RHET and CMN programs have had to adjust to teaching students who are second language English speakers. To investigate RHET and CMN programs, I interviewed a senior RHET advisor and CMN advisor to learn what program accommodations had been undertaken to meet the needs of these students, as well as other related issues in RHET and CMN programs that may have appeared due to the significant increase in the international undergraduate population at UIUC in recent years.
In addition, to find out how the test interventions affected the undergraduate advisor community, I interviewed a senior Undergraduate Academic Advisor who played an essential role in communicating with the undergraduate advisor community about the EPT and ESL program. The undergraduate advisor community has had an important influence in the decision to develop a remote EPT or an alternative method of placing international undergraduate students in to appropriate ESL writing classes prior to their arrival on campus. The increase in the number of incoming international undergraduate students in need of ESL courses has escalated undergraduate advisors’ workload in advising these students but advisors may not have been aware of these students’ needs. Communication with the senior advisor could provide insight into the demands of the undergraduate advisor community and explain why the Online EPT was so essential to them.

The UIUC Writers Workshop (WW; http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/) is a service for students, faculty, and staff in all disciplines to receive one-on-one writing assistance. The surge of undergraduate international students could have changed the linguistic backgrounds of their clients. WW, to meet the needs of this changing undergraduate population, could have had to revise or add to their existing programs. To find out about how the surge of international undergraduate students affected WW, I interviewed the director of that organization to get a deeper understanding of how the program is trying to adapt to this change and provide assistance to second language English writers.

I contacted the program directors directly via email and conducted face-to-face interviews at a location of their choice (see APPENDIX C: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW SOLICITATION EMAIL). In the interview request email, I attached the consent form and clarified that the interview will be audio recorded and even though their names will not
be included in the final draft of the report, I will disclose their job titles. If they felt uncomfortable with me using their job titles to match the interview content, they had a choice not to have their job titles reported and I will remove any content in the interview that could identify them. The four main interview topics were also clarified in the interview request email, which were:

1. Goals of your program and the kinds of services you provide
2. Changes or additions, if any, your program had to make for international undergraduate students
3. Difficulties or challenges your program due to the surge
4. Staff training.

The interviews were audio recorded with a digital recorder and later selectively transcribed depending on the relevance to the research goals of this study. A draft of the interview questions can be found in APPENDIX D: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. The findings from the interviews can complement the survey results because in a mixed-methods study, results from varying methods can be used to investigate intersecting topics from different viewpoints for breath and depth (Greene, 2007). A semi-structured interview form was chosen to allow new ideas and questions to be developed during the interview process as a result of what the interviewee said.

Following strategies suggested by Creswell (2008), I analyzed the interview data based on the research questions and the research scope for the study (see Figure 2).
Figure 2. Interview Data Analysis

Once interview data were collected, the audio recordings were prepared through selective transcription by comparing the responses with the interview questions. Once the data were organized, the transcriptions were coded and developed into overlapping themes based on the scope of the research. The four common themes were developed based on the four interview topics that were outlined to the interviewees prior to the interview along with information on the interviewees’ job descriptions and work experience.

Research Question 3

The third research question was to examine how effective and accommodating the policy and the EPT/ESL changes have been to international undergraduate students and undergraduate advisors. The main score users of the EPT are the students and the advisors and most of the changes to the policy and the development of the Online EPT were geared to meet the needs of these two groups. Despite various efforts to meet the needs of these two groups, their perceptions and feedback on these changes have not been analyzed. Surveys were chosen as the method of data gathering to investigate this question because the advisors and students are the best and perhaps the only two sources from which to obtain the required information. Literature also
suggests investigation of experiences at other institutions as sources of information, but due to the uniqueness of programs and institutions, information from external sources may not be applicable to this context (Wentland, 2012).

The Online EPT was launched in the summer of 2012 for incoming Fall 2012 undergraduate international students. The EPT office received initial feedback from a few test-takers regarding the Online EPT through an informal survey conducted by ATLAS (Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts & Sciences; http://www.atlas.illinois.edu/). ATLAS is a support unit that provides information technology services for students, faculty, and staff in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at UIUC. It also provides technical support for the Online EPT. The informal survey asked students questions mostly related to technical problems when taking the Online EPT and did not tap into their impressions on the use of the Online EPT and how the policies implemented for them were impacting their educational experiences at UIUC.

Two surveys, student and advisor surveys, were conducted to find out how effective and accommodating the policies and communication regarding the EPT were to the students and the advisors. The student and advisor groups were chosen because they are the main stakeholders of the EPT. The development of the Online EPT was centered around the needs of the two groups because they are the main score users.

The purpose of the student survey was to ascertain students’ relative levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the English-support program at UIUC, with special interest given to the EPT and the ESL writing courses.

Survey questions were developed based on the inquiries that I received while working as the EPT RA. Through email exchanges and face-to-face interactions with test-takers, I observed the inquiries and identified common themes. The main themes are as follow:
1. Clarity of the EPT requirement to students
2. Taking the EPT and Composition 1 courses
3. EPT/ESL information access, communication, and registration process.

In other words, the survey asked for students’ thoughts on the University’s efforts to communicate with students regarding their EPT requirements, clarity of those requirements, communication with their advisors regarding the requirements, communication regarding the EPT registration procedure, and other information related to taking the EPT, including their sense of satisfaction with the process. The target population of the survey was international undergraduate students at UIUC. The international undergraduate student survey had two stages, a small scale pilot survey and the main survey. The purpose of the pilot survey was to get an overview of the test-takers’ perception of the EPT and receive comments to improve the questions in the main survey. For the small-scale pilot survey, I contacted 20 international undergraduate students that had taken the EPT in Fall 2012 and they were recruited through email. The pilot student survey was sent out on July 15, 2013 and was available for 30 days. Two responses were received and minor changes were made for the main survey based on those responses. The changes can be tracked in APPENDIX E: STUDENT SURVEY.

For the main student survey, I contacted representatives from international student organizations for their cooperation in distributing the electronic surveys. I asked the representatives from two international student organizations, the Korean Student Association and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association if they will allow the use of their emailing list. With help from the Korean Student Association, the survey information was sent out through their e-newsletter which was sent out to 80 Korean undergraduate students. Representatives from the Chinese Students and Scholars Associations could not be reached.
I also received unidentifiable email lists of undergraduate EPT test-takers and students in
the ESLP lists (lists produced by the office of admissions with information on admits required to
take the EPT) from 2009 until 2013. I sent out emails requesting participation. There was no
effort to link the student responses from the survey to any existing EPT-related data. The main
student survey was initially sent out on September 24, 2013 and, in order to improve the
response rate, again on October 2, 2013. The survey was closed on November 7, 2013.

The second survey was geared toward undergraduate advisors. The undergraduate
advisors initially meet with their students prior to the start of the semester for course selection.
The Online EPT was developed to provide them and their students with EPT scores before the
advisors meet with the students to better prepare them for the semester. Therefore, the survey
asked advisors for their impressions of the Online EPT and whether test satisfied their demands.
In addition, I asked them about the effectiveness of the policies that arose with the University’s
intention to better support ESL students with English instruction. The survey also inquired about
their knowledge and understanding of the policies regarding ESL students and their requirements
to find out about the effectiveness of the communication between them and the University policy
makers. Because the perspectives from advisors could shed light on the actual process of how
scores are communicated from the EPT office to the students and how the scores are used in
advising sessions, it was important to conduct a small-scale pilot survey to obtain an overview of
the characteristics of score use and then revise or generate topics and questions with respect to
the actual survey. This was to increase validity and reliability of the survey because responses
from the pilot survey may provide feedback about whether the questions are clearly phrased and
understood. For the pilot survey, I used a list of representative undergraduate advisors from the
EPT database and emailed them for their participation in the pilot survey. The pilot survey was
sent out to six representative academic advisors on July 17, 2013. One response was received and based on the response, I added several open-ended questions to college follow-up comments.

For the main survey, I contacted the personnel affiliated with the advisor listserv at UIUC and requested distribution of the survey. A draft of the advisor survey questions with changes from the pilot to the main survey can be found in APPENDIX F: ACADEMIC ADVISOR SURVEY. The main advisor survey was first sent out on October 1, 2013 and again on October 14, 2013 through the UIUC academic advisor listserv. The survey was closed on November 9, 2013.

Both surveys consisted of demographic information, 4-point Likert scale items and checkbox items to collect satisfaction rates, degree of frequency, and data on information channels and other relevant information. For items that asked for satisfaction rates and degree of frequency and questions that do not apply to all participants were given the option ‘Not Applicable’, which was coded as missing data for analysis.

Participants in the two surveys answered the questions at a time and location of their choosing. I used UIUC Webtools to build the online surveys. Both student and advisor surveys took about 20-30 minutes to complete. The consent form was presented at the beginning of the surveys. The consent form explained the purpose of the study, benefits and possible risks, confidentiality of results, and research contact information. Participants were allowed to submit only one survey. Participants were restricted from submitting multiple surveys, as Webtools has a function to allow only one submission per NetID. However, to ensure anonymity the NetIDs were not collected.

Soliciting perspectives from administrators, undergraduate advisors, program supervisors, and students can provide more comprehensive and complementary representations of the various
stakeholders, their characteristics, their demands and needs, and degrees of satisfaction. The various participants and methods can help illustrate, clarify, supplement, and analyze the different aspects of test development. A mixed methods study for purposes of complementarity can “elaborate, enhance, deepen, and broaden the overall interpretations and inferences from the study” (Greene, 2007, p. 101). This mix of methods provides a fuller contextual explanation for the research questions and improves the validity of findings.

I submitted this project for review for exemption by the UIUC Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) on March 4, 2013. The research project was reviewed and approved (i.e., exempted) by the Campus IRB on March 11, 2013.

**Maintaining Objectivity for Data Quality**

In this study, in order to maintain objectivity, I included voices from different stakeholders, including test developer and administrator, test-takers, and test score users. Previous literature on the topic of institutional placement testing focused mostly on test result analysis and test development. The scope of the research could not be studied with one data source, so multiple data sources were helpful in comprehending the research problems. The utilization of multiple sources of data provides more evidence which can offer balanced viewpoints. Qualitative data were considered because they focus on the significance of the research context and observations relevant in the study. Quantitative data were included to assess the general characteristics and knowledge of different participant groups. The mix of results from the mandate map, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys can help understand the rich and complex research context and better answer the proposed research questions. By providing rationales for using specific research methods and keeping a neutral and balanced manner,
objectivity was achieved by basing data, analysis and results in contexts and people within the research scope.
CHAPTER V
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The first research question is: What are the mandates that influenced the development of the Online English Placement Test and what types of test interventions were implemented to build the Online EPT?

In order to investigate this issue, I studied the changes in regard to EPT test administration and policy from Fall 2008 until Fall 2013. First, I provide an overview of the research context. Then, in the second part of the chapter, I offer a detailed, chronological research agenda of the English Placement Test. Based on the findings, I discuss the types of mandates and test interventions that were implemented to develop the Online EPT.

Overview of the time period of the research

This dissertation analyzed the changes to the EPT and other EPT-related issues from 2008 until 2013. Just before the Fall 2008 semester, the ESL and EPT programs were notified by the Dean’s office of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) of a surge in the number of international undergraduate students that will be required to take the EPT that semester due to the overall rise in the number of international undergraduate admits at UIUC. The number of EPT-required undergraduate admits that the EPT program received in Fall 2008 was 413, which was about 300% increase compared to the actual number of undergraduate test-takers of the previous school year. The reason behind the sudden surge in the number of undergraduate international enrollment can be traced back to the University’s decision to increase diversity on campus in combination with a proposal in 2006 to increase the number of out-of-state students because these students will be
paying considerably higher tuition. This was a strategic decision under the former University of Illinois President because of decreased state funding (Cohen & Richards, 2012). According to Cohen and Richards, in 2011, international undergraduate students composed of approximately 14% of the undergraduate population but their tuition helped fund 24% of the tuition revenue at UIUC. In Fall 2013, UIUC hosted 9,421 international students, which is the second highest international student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities, behind University of Southern California (International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS), 2013). Prior to the surge, the UIUC international population had consisted of mostly graduate students (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of international student enrollment

Figure 4 shows the sharp increase in the number of new undergraduate students 2008.
The total number of enrolled international undergraduate students increased by 31% from 2007 to 2008 and continued to increase by roughly 20% each year until 2011. This rise was largely due to the jump in the number of international undergraduate new student enrollment, which increased by 56% from 2007 to 2008. As of 2013, international students account for approximately 22% of overall students.

Because of the surge, the demographic trend of the EPT test-takers changed. Prior to the surge, approximately one in five EPT test-takers was an undergraduate student. However, based on the number of expected undergraduate students required to take the EPT from LAS in July of 2008, the expected number of undergraduate test-takers would be around the same number as graduate test-takers. Prior to the surge, the main stakeholders of the EPT were graduate test-takers, their departments, and the Graduate College which is a unit of UIUC that oversees academic support and advising to graduate students. Due to the Fall semester of 2008 surge, the
EPT results began to have more influence on the undergraduate student population that has different data processing channels compared to graduate students. For undergraduate students, their academic advisors play an integral role in each student’s educational experience. Undergraduate academic advisors provide information on academic credits to meet the graduation requirements and career goals. They help students in developing an academic plan and monitor their progress. Undergraduate academic advisors also serve as a campus resource by helping students find support from other offices in the university. As academic advisors are the main source of information for undergraduate students regarding degree requirements, the undergraduate academic advisor community also became a primary stakeholder of the EPT. Because of this significant change in the test-taker demographics, their needs and demands began to guide the direction of EPT research and related policy decisions.

The significant influence of the undergraduate advising community on the EPT led to two major changes: 1) the development of the Online English Placement Test, which will be explained in the following section and 2) new score reporting channels to undergraduate academic advisors. Prior to the surge, the score reporting process to undergraduate test-takers was very simple; the scores were reported only to test-takers. However, due to the surge, there was a demand for undergraduate advisors to have EPT results readily available and easily accessible during advising sessions. Starting Fall 2009, the EPT results began to show on Banner, an integrated student academic record system and Placement and Proficiency (PNP), an online system that contains test scores for undergraduate students. In addition to Banner and PNP, some colleges began to receive group-based score reports. This streamlined process seems to have provided a solution to getting EPT score results out to the necessary stakeholders for accurate
and timely registration into ESL writing courses. This is discussed in more detail in the mandate map.

Since the surge of international undergraduate EPT test-takers, the EPT team requested a list of newly admitted undergraduate students who are required to take the English Placement Test. The list is referred to as the ESLP list and this list is generated by Undergraduate Admissions at UIUC. Table 6 and Table 7 show the number of actual undergraduate test-takers of the EPT and the number of students in the ESLP list, respectively, categorized by degree-seeking freshmen, degree-seeking transfer, and non-degree exchange status for Fall semesters from Fall 2007 until Fall 2013.

Table 6

*Actual number of EPT undergraduate test-takers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual EPT numbers</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree-seeking</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Freshmen &amp; Transfer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of actual UG EPT test-takers</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Expected number of EPT test-takers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESLP List</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree-seeking (Freshmen &amp; Transfer)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total UG students required to take the EPT</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data developed from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at UIUC.

Figure 5 shows the comparison between the total number of actual undergraduate EPT test-takers and the number of newly admitted undergraduate students (degree-seeking freshmen, degree-seeking transfer students, and non-degree exchange students) who are required to take the EPT for Fall semesters from Fall of 2007 until Fall 2013.
Figure 5. Comparison between the number undergraduate actual test-takers and expected test-takers

The reason behind the general trend seen in Figure 5 is because, prior to Fall 2012, the decision to fulfill the EPT requirement was advisor-driven and even though the campus may have stipulated (a) that the student take the EPT and (b) that the student fulfill Composition I via ESL, students could avoid that by self-advising/decision-making or by consultation with an advisor. Furthermore, it can be seen that the estimated number of 413 test-takers that the EPT/ESL programs received immediately prior to Fall 2008 semester was inaccurate. It is not clear how the estimated number of 413 was calculated, thus, it was difficult for the EPT/ESL programs to rely on the numbers provided by Office of Undergraduate Admissions at that time. Eventually, it took approximately one year for the communication between the EPT/ESL programs and Undergraduate Admissions to be successful. The discrepancy between the expected and actual test-taker numbers can be traced to the advisor-driven decision-making process of taking and fulfilling the Composition I requirement. The percentage of this mismatch has been relatively
consistent since the surge in the number of students taking the EPT (see Table 8). The negative percentage value (-37\%) of the mismatch in Fall 2008 was because of the inaccurate information about expected EPT test-takers. In the Fall of 2012, when the EPT requirement was enforced on degree-seeking undergraduate students, the percentage of mismatch decreased, but throughout, the trend has been relatively stable since the surge. Another reason behind this mismatch could be that non-degree students are not subject to the same requirements as the degree-seeking students, but requirement regulations for non-degree students were beyond the scope of this research. Hence, this point needs further investigation.

Table 8

*Percentage of mismatch between expected and actual EPT test-taker numbers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mismatch</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>-37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The mismatch percentage was calculated as follows: (expected number of test-takers - actual number of test-takers)/expected number of test-takers * 100

The Online EPT was the outcome of a needs analysis of undergraduate academic advisors. Academic advisors conduct pre-arrival virtual advising with international undergraduate admits and in order to get the students registered during virtual advising, the academic advisors needed to have the EPT results to help their students register for Composition 1 courses. Because the EPT was available in August, the week before the start of instruction, advisors were unable to recommend composition courses to the students. Because of the need to have EPT results prior to students’ arrival, there was a high demand for remote testing for ESL writing courses. Hence, the Online EPT was launched for Fall 2012 incoming undergraduate students and was also
administered in Fall 2013. The Online EPT is expected to be offered each summer, immediately before the start of Fall semester. Table 9 compares the undergraduate placement rates of Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 Online EPT and On-campus EPT.

Table 9

Comparison of Online and On-campus EPT undergraduate placement rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012 Online</th>
<th>2012 Fall</th>
<th>2013 Online</th>
<th>2013 Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 113</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 111-112*</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 115</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This sequence was formerly the ESL 114-115 sequence.

Figure 6 displays the yearly undergraduate EPT placement rates from 2007 until Fall 2013.
Figure 6. Annual undergraduate EPT placement rates. ESL 111-112 sequence was formerly the ESL 114-115 sequence.

Since 2007 until 2011 school year, test-takers that were placed into ESL 111-112 (formerly, ESL 114-115) have been relatively larger than ESL 115. However, since the 2012 school year, the placement rates have changed as the percentage of test-takers placed into ESL 115 became comparatively larger than those placed into ESL 111-112 (formerly, ESL 114-115). It is interesting to note that the ranking of placement rates changed when the Online EPT was initially launched and this ranking was maintained in Fall 2013, when the Online EPT was administered for the second year in a row. Therefore, a two-proportion z-test was conducted to test if there were statistical differences in placement ration of students placed into ESL 111-112.
and 115 in the same year for different test delivery formats. For Fall 2012, there was no statistical difference between the ratio of students placed into ESL 111-112 from the Online EPT and the On-campus EPT (z = 1.193, p = 0.2329). Likewise, the ratio of students placed into ESL 115 in Fall 2012 from the Online and On-campus EPT was not statistically different (z = -1.193, p = 0.2329). The same analyses were conducted for Fall 2013, but for both ESL 111-112 and 115 placements, there were no statistical differences in placement ratios (ESL 111-112: z = 1.305, p = 0.1919; ESL 115: z = -1.377, p = 0.1685).

The following section of the chapter will provide a more detailed look into the series of events that occurred from Fall 2008 until Fall 2013 to offer the context of the research and better understanding of the mandates that influenced the development of the Online EPT.
Chronological Research Topics of the EPT

According to Davidson and Cho (2001), the earliest record of academic English testing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) for international students dates to 1907. However, it was not until 40 years later that ESL instruction started at UIUC. During the next period, which was referred to as the first era of EPT by Davidson and Cho (2001), ESL instruction was heavily influenced by structuralist literary theory. Language testing under the structuralist school usually included multiple-item instruments that focused on discrete linguistic features. Around 1950, the UIUC ESL program used the Lado and Fries’ tests from Michigan. In the mid-1950s, the UIUC faculty began to write in-house tests that resembled the Lado and Fries’ Michigan tests. These tests assessed knowledge of particular lexical items and discrete-point items of grammar. ESL testing also included an essay component. Due to lack of records, it is difficult to comprehend how the score from the essay test influenced a student’s overall placement into the ESL program.

In the second era, Lyle Bachman began supervision of ESL testing at UIUC. His two main influences to the test were: 1) addition of a new structure (grammar) test and replacement of the essay test with a close and a dictation test and 2) application and attention to psychometric features of the test. It was also during this period that the name ‘ESL Placement Test (EPT)’ was coined. According to Davidson and Cho (2001), Bachman’s influence initiated language testing research at UIUC, which coincides with the advancement of research in the field of language testing.

The third and current era of the EPT includes operational quality management and classroom content. The direct essay test was reintroduced to the EPT during this era when Fred Davidson began oversight of the test. This step of including the essay test had been planned prior
to Bachman’s departure from the University. Based on the teaching goals of the ESL program, test specifications were written in detail to reflect actual classroom content. The EPT specification provides various guidelines in terms of test administration, management, staff and rater training, development, and quality control.

The first version of the EPT was the Regular EPT (henceforth, R-EPT, unless otherwise indicated). The R-EPT had two parts: a written test and an oral interview. The written test was a video-and-reading-based essay test that required test-takers to read an article and watch a video on a given essay topic. Then, test-takers had to use the information from the two sources to compose an argumentative essay. The written exam took 50 minutes. In the oral interview, test-takers had to speak for approximately three minutes on a given question. If test-takers spoke intelligibly they were exempted from further oral testing. If not, test-takers had to continue the interview in which they were required to read sentences so that their oral pronunciation skills could be further assessed. This one-on-one interview took about 5-30 minutes to administer.

The second version of the EPT was the Enhanced EPT (henceforth, E-EPT, unless otherwise indicated). The E-EPT was a workshop-based test that combines a written exam and an oral interview and is based on a model proposed by Cho (2001). The written exam of the E-EPT was the main difference between this version of the EPT and the R-EPT. The E-EPT written exam provided test-takers with activities designed to facilitate them throughout the writing process. According to Cho (2001), the various activities in the written exam were designed based on cognitive writing process theory and process-oriented writing assessment. Test-takers were encouraged to actively participate in the test procedure and interact with other test-takers to obtain feedback on their writing performance. Some constraints of a timed, single-draft written exam could be lack of time and failure to consider the procedures during the writing procedure.
The E-EPT addressed these constraints and provided test-takers with a more facilitative writing environment. The format of the oral interview was the same as the oral interview in the R-EPT.

The third version of the EPT is the Semi-Enhanced EPT (henceforth, SE-EPT, unless otherwise indicated). The SE-EPT is the shortened version of the E-EPT. The SE-EPT consists of two sections, a written exam and an oral interview. The written section of the SE-EPT is an integrated written exam that requires test-takers to write an argumentative essay on a given topic, based on information provided from a reading text and a short lecture. The written exam of the SE-EPT maintains the essence of the E-EPT, the facilitative writing process. The SE-EPT is a half-day test and this version of the EPT has been the operational version of the on-campus EPT since 2007. The SE-EPT is administered one week prior to the beginning of instruction each semester (Fall, Spring and Summer). This version was designed because it was a challenge to get test-takers to come in for a full day of testing before the start of instruction. Although the SE-EPT has been the operational version of the EPT for many years, the test procedures of the R-EPT, E-EPT, and SE-EPT are provided in APPENDIX G: PROCEDURES OF THE REGULAR EPT, ENHANCED EPT, AND SEMI-ENHANCED EPT. In the following sections, I will discuss changes to the EPT in chronological order by school year. This chronological explanation of mandates constitutes the mandate map.

**Changes and developments during the 2008-2009 school year**

During the 2007-2008 school year, the number of students that took the English Placement Test (EPT) was 495, 77.4% of test-takers being graduate students. The total number of EPT test-takers and the percentage of graduate test-takers had also been similar in 2006-2007 school year (see Table 1). However, at the end of July 2008, the Division of English as an International Language (currently the Department of Linguistics) received information from the
Dean’s office of Liberal Arts and Sciences informing the department that there would be a sharp increase in the number of undergraduate students that are required to take the EPT. According to the data, the number of undergraduate students required to take the EPT for Fall 2008 semester was 413. This was almost a 300% increase from previous Fall semester. Due to this surge, the EPT staff increased number of test dates and the ESL program increased the number of sections in their courses. Despite the preparation for the 300% increase, the number of undergraduate test-taker registration was not as high as the programs had anticipated. Four days into testing for the semester, only 113 undergraduate students had registered for the test. An email reminder was sent out to the 413 students that were required to take the test to encourage students to take the test. Many students that received this email were confused about their requirement to take the EPT because they explained that they had not been aware of this requirement. In the end, 287 undergraduate students took the EPT in Fall 2008.

To prepare for the increase in the number of undergraduate test-takers, the EPT staff had implemented two changes to the administration of the test. The first change was the number of testing sessions. Prior to Fall 2008, six or seven Fall EPT testing sessions were available to students, including one session after the start of instruction. In Fall 2008, in anticipation of the increase in the number of test-takers, the number of testing sessions was increased to nine, including two sessions after the start of instruction.

The second change was the utilization of Phase I in the oral interview. The idea of separating out the oral interview Phase I was taken from the Enhanced EPT, in which the oral interview was divided into two sections: Phase I and II. Phase I requires a test-taker meet individually with a rater and provide a 3-5 minute speaking turn. The rater asks the test-taker with a question to make a judgment of the global proficiency of the test-taker’s English
pronunciation, specifically whether the test-taker’s pronunciation is at the extreme ends of the ratings scale (see APPENDIX B: RATING SCALE FOR THE EPT ORAL INTERVIEW). From Phase I, a test-taker may receive one of three ratings: 1, 5, or Phase II. If a level 1 is assigned, it suggests that the test-taker displayed a great deal of difficulty speaking intelligibly as a result of low pronunciation ability. The test-taker is highly recommended (undergraduate test-takers) or required (graduate students) to take ESL110/510, Pronunciation for Academic Purposes. If a score of 5 is assigned, it suggests that the test taker displayed no problem speaking intelligibly and this test-taker is exempt from taking the oral pronunciation course. If a test-taker is assigned to Phase II, it suggests that the test-taker displayed neither a great deal of proficiency in pronunciation nor a great deal of difficulty. The test-taker must proceed to a second interview in which more pronunciation data is collected. Table 10 shows the EPT oral test placement code information.

Table 10  

_EPT Oral Interview Placement Code_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Level</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>110hc</td>
<td>510q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>110hc</td>
<td>510q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>110c</td>
<td>510c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Letter(s) after course number denotes placement information, i.e. "hc" means "highly recommended", "q" means "required", and "c" means "recommended". Test-takers are placed into oral level 1 and 5 based on Phase I. Test-takers are placed into oral level 2, 3, and 4 based on Phase II.
Prior to Fall 2008, both Phase I and II were conducted individually in the afternoon after the completion of the written exam. However, in order to shorten the afternoon EPT interview, Phase I was conducted to all test-takers before the start of the written exam. For the afternoon interviews, only the test-takers who received the rating, Phase II, were asked to return for further testing.

The increase in the number of test-takers in Fall 2008 resulted in an increase in the workload for administrating the EPT. EPT-related duties had been mandatory to all ESL teaching assistants without pay. However, because of the sharp increase in the amount of work, in Fall 2008, UIUC paid EPT workers on a pro-rated basis for the estimated additional workload due to the increase. Furthermore, due to indicators that show that the increase would be permanent, an argument was made that the EPT should pay for EPT work that supports the entire test. As a result, starting Spring 2009, all pre-semester EPT-related work became optional duties for ESL TAs and other qualified workers and were paid at the standing department hourly rate.

The series of events that happened during Fall 2008 EPT led to a number of meetings to investigate the cause and solutions to three main issues that arose. The first issue was receiving accurate data of undergraduate and graduate students that are required to take the EPT which will assist in preparation for the EPT as well as ESL course set-up. Another problem was communication with EPT-required students to inform them of this requirement and the necessary test-related information. In addition, communication with undergraduate academic advisors regarding the test scores and course registration was more important than before due to the growth in the number of students who were impacted by the EPT results.

To address first issue of receiving accurate data of students who are required to take the EPT, the Graduate College and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions were contacted to
inquire about receiving a list of students who are required to take the EPT. Graduate College provided the EPT-required list for graduate students and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions provided the list for undergraduate students. Accurate lists would help in test preparation as well as ESL program administration. Regarding the list of undergraduate students required to take the EPT (known as the “ESLP list”), it took about a year of negotiation to receive accurate data from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. This was mostly because of the complex algorithm involved in making this requirement decision (see Figure 7).
Figure 7. Previous undergraduate ESLP decision algorithm in effect until August 2012
This algorithm shown in Figure 7 was used until the August 2012 and then, starting September 2012, a new, much simpler algorithm was implemented. The current (Spring 2014) algorithm being used for EPT requirement purposes is much simpler than the previous one. A contact in the Office of Undergraduate Admission explained the new algorithm, which is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Current undergraduate ESLP decision algorithm in effect since September 2012

Therefore, after the completion of Fall 2008 EPT, the EPT/ESL staff met with the staff from the UIUC Office of the Provost responsible for undergraduate academic course approval process and program of study and UIUC office of registrar to clarify the EPT score code for placement input and information on the EPT to undergraduate advisors for proper advising. This
meeting was the beginning of many meetings to create a communication and data transfer route for the EPT office to obtain accurate information about the EPT test-takers and different units at the University to received information about the EPT for accurate planning and advising.

Communication with potential test-takers also became an issue due to the increase in the total number of test-takers. For Fall 2008, in order to inform students about their EPT requirement, an email was sent out in August to the students that were identified by the undergraduate office of admission as required to take the EPT. As mentioned above, this email confused many students that were unaware of this requirement. It was discussed that notification of this requirement should be distributed well before the start of the Fall semester and accurate identification of EPT-required students is necessary to avoid confusion.

Another problem was communication with undergraduate academic advisors regarding EPT results. Previously, the EPT scores had only gone out to test-takers and it was their responsibility to inform their advisors about their EPT results. Because the increase in the number of undergraduate test-takers, the ESL course registration process had to be simpler and clearer to the undergraduate academic advisors. After the completion of the Fall 2008 semester, the EPT staff met with Administrative Information Technology Services (AITS; http://www.aits.uillinois.edu/), a support unit at UIUC. AITS offers technical support for administrative processes and system information of the University of Illinois. The meeting included representatives from AITS, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE; http://cte.illinois.edu/), and EPT to discuss the EPT score upload to Banner. Banner is an integrated system that allows authorized UIUC personnel to process students’ academic history, registration information, and other official records. EPT scores go first to Banner and then are picked up into Placement and Proficiency (PNP). Placement and Proficiency (PNP) is an online
system where undergraduate academic advisors can access their advisees’ test profiles. CTE is a support unit that provides assistance in instructional development and measurement and evaluation at UIUC. With technical assistance from AITS and CTE, it was decided that starting Fall 2009, EPT results would be accessible to undergraduate academic advisors through Banner and PNP. This process would allow the EPT to be a more obvious option when selecting a suitable route to fulfill the Freshman Composition 1 requirement. After each EPT test session, the EPT RA sends the EPT scores to CTE for upload. CTE uploads the scores to Banner after one business day of the test session. The EPT registration system collects students’ self-reported data and the EPT workers double-check students’ information at the testing session. CTE and AITS were concerned that there could still be errors in students’ information, therefore, it was decided by CTE and AITS that the EPT RA would first send the EPT results to CTE for upload, and in case there are errors in the reports, CTE will handle them. Once the EPT scores are uploaded to Banner, PNP then picks up the scores. This creates a functional two-day delay in uploading the EPT scores to Banner and PNP.

A major achievement for the ESL program was the ESL evaluation workshop (“the Summit”) held on December 11, 2008 where representatives from ESL/EPT and Rhetoric programs compared the two programs in terms of program structure, course sequence, goals, staff training, and coordination for course/placement transfers between the two programs. This was the first time the two programs liaised with one another to discuss how the increase in the number of undergraduate international students have affected their programs, learn about the goals of each program, and administrative details on how to manage various international student advising issues.
Changes and developments during the 2009-2010 school year

Prior to the start of the Fall 2009 semester, the EPT personnel were invited to present for undergraduate advisors at summer registration advising review sessions per request from certain undergraduate colleges. The purpose of these presentations was for the EPT staff to provide the most current and accurate information on EPT/ESL policies, test information, course registration, and other EPT advising matters. This was also a way for the EPT staff to provide a potential solution to the issue of accurate and timely communication that was brought up the previous year due to the surge. These presentations was also a way for the EPT staff to ensure that suggestions and requests undergraduate academic advisors were being taken in to account by the administrators of the test and to provide updates on how the staff was working to meet the needs of the advisors and the international undergraduate students.

Based on the major achievements from the previous school year, the EPT operationalized some administrative changes to the test. To meet the needs of undergraduate academic advisors for more accurate and timely transfers of EPT results to assist in proper advising, daily EPT score reports were sent electronically to representative advisors in each undergraduate college for distribution. Those seven colleges were the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, the College of Applied Health Sciences, the College of Business, the Division of General Studies\(^3\), the College of Engineering, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students from these seven colleges make up approximately 98% (498 out of 508; data from 2012-2013 school year) of the undergraduate EPT test-takers. Advisors were provided with scores from both the written and oral sections of the test after each test session. This was to compensate for the two-business day delay in the EPT results

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\(^3\) The Division of General Studies (DGS) functions as a College for undergraduate students who have not yet declared a major field of study.
showing up in Banner and Placement and Proficiency (PNP) systems. Even though the scores were available right after each test session, advisors could not view their advisees’ scores online until two business days after each test session due to the delay in transferring the scores to the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) for upload to Banner and PNP systems.

Although many efforts were made to provide accurate and timely EPT scores to test score users (i.e. advisors), the post-surge reporting of the EPT scores to test-takers was first conducted face-to-face. Test-takers were required to come during EPT score reporting and advising hours to receive their scores and register for the ESL courses. Unlike other courses, ESL course registration could only be done through one-on-one advising because the ESL program wanted to ensure that all students that were enrolling in their courses had taken the EPT and were registering for appropriate course(s) based on the EPT results. This was the way that ESL registration had been; however, this showed to be an inefficient method due to the sharp increase in the number of test-takers that had to register for ESL courses.

Efforts to meet the surge in the 2009-2010 school year focused mostly on creating a more convenient score reporting process for the test-takers. The problems from Fall 2009 EPT of EPT score reporting, student advising, and ESL course registration led to discussions with ATLAS (Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts and Sciences; http://www.atlas.illinois.edu/) to develop online score viewing and ESL course registration systems that would reduce the labor necessary to distribute test scores face-to-face and assist in courses registration. The online score viewing and registration systems were implemented for the Spring 2010 EPT. Figure 9 shows the previous EPT score reporting processes for undergraduate students and their academic advisors.
Figure 9. Pre-surge undergraduate EPT score reporting process

Before the surge, the EPT score was reported only to the test-takers. Figure 10 shows the revised score reporting process for undergraduate students.

Figure 10. Post-surge undergraduate EPT score reporting process
The revised score reporting process shows that the scores are being sent to students and their academic advisors. This is to allow prompt and accurate registration into ESL writing courses. The efforts by the EPT and ESL staff to meet the needs of the academic advisors and students reduced the time it took for the test scores to be transferred from the EPT office to advisors and students. Despite the work, there was still a demand, primarily from the undergraduate academic advisor community, for pre-arrive placement results. The demand for pre-arrival placement led to a series of research projects by the EPT staff. Two simultaneous research projects were initiated in Spring 2010: self-assessment and online testing.

The self-assessment project started in Spring 2010. The EPT team created an academic writing self-assessment questionnaire through a detailed ESL course syllabi analysis. The two main questions of the study were:

1) Are there differences in the results of the self-assessment survey based on placement level?

2) Can self-assessment data be used in making placement decisions?

The EPT R.A. created the self-assessment questionnaire based on the two main research questions and the surveys were sent out in Fall 2010.

The development of the Online EPT (O-EPT) began in Spring 2010. The first step was identifying the goal and test construct of the operational EPT (i.e., the Semi-Enhanced EPT; SE-EPT—see APPENDIX G: PROCEDURES OF THE REGULAR EPT, ENHANCED EPT, AND SEMI-ENHANCED EPT). The purpose of this step was to ensure that the O-EPT is aligned to the EPT and that the two versions of the test are assessing the same skills. A detailed analyses and revision of the EPT test specification was conducted. This step revealed that the biggest
challenge in adding an electronic delivery format of the EPT would be how we incorporate the interactive elements from the on-campus version to the online one.

The second step was examining the different online platforms available for developing the O-EPT. I researched two learning management systems (LMS): Illinois Compass powered by Blackboard Vista Enterprise Edition and Moodle. Both options were supported by ATLAS, the information technology support group in UIUC. Moodle was chosen based on its ease in navigation and due to the fact that Moodle was already being used by other subject areas (e.g. chemistry, French, German, Latin, physics, Spanish) as their platform for pre-arrival, online placement exams. This would allow the EPT to receive the same security and technical support as with other placement tests on campus.

Based on the specifications of Moodle, the O-EPT test specification was drafted (see APPENDIX H: ONLINE EPT TEST SPECIFICATION). I received feedback from other language testing students on campus regarding its format, layout, and consistency with the SE-EPT.

Another slight, yet important, change was in the name of the test. In February of 2010, it was decided the “E” in “EPT” will change from “ESL” to “English”. This change was made based on the following four reasons.

1) “ESL” was historically used to avoid confusion with the Rhetoric placement test. However, because the Rhetoric placement test no longer exists, that confusion will not exist.

2) A new test on campus, the English Proficiency Interview (EPI), was introduced to test the international teaching assistants at UIUC. It was decided that the “E” in both tests
should refer to the same thing. For more information on the EPI, please see its website, [http://cte.illinois.edu/testing/oral_eng/main.html](http://cte.illinois.edu/testing/oral_eng/main.html).

3) The term “ESL” could have some negative implications. The change to a common denominator “English” could avoid the second language distinction to allow for a wider and more progressive view of the target skill domains of the EPT.

4) If future tests of English were to be developed on campus, it could be beneficial to keep the “EP” parallelism to represent “English Proficiency” (for the EPI) and “English Placement” (for the EPT).

**Changes and developments during the 2010-2011 school year**

The self-assessment study which was initiated in the previous school year continued. An online version of the questionnaire was sent out by email to 774 EPT test-takers. The response rate was approximately 10%. The results of the questionnaire showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the total self-assessment score between the different placement groups ($t = -0.71, p > 0.05$). Furthermore, it was found that students’ self-assessment results may not be good indicators of placement. However, the results suggest that they could as a needs analysis tool to help instructors in investigating their students’ needs (Chung & Kim, 2010). Because the self-assessment questionnaire results showed that the tool could not be used to place students in to appropriate ESL writing courses, the pressure grew to build an online writing test to assess international students.

Because the results from the self-assessment study showed that self-assessment could only be used as a supplemental tool for placement, the timely development and launch of the Online EPT became a priority. The O-EPT test site went into development on Moodle in preparation for the first O-EPT pilot test (see APPENDIX H: ONLINE EPT TEST).
SPECIFICATION). For participants of the pilot test, new undergraduate students were recruited from countries other than the U.S. This was done for two main reasons: 1) to ensure that the technical components of the website function properly overseas and 2) to warrant that test-taker behavior will be the same as in an operational test setting. I considered recruiting volunteers from around the community, but felt that their test-taking behaviors could be different from actual test-takers. Therefore, in order to recruit volunteer test-takers for piloting the EPT, a list of all international undergraduate admits who are required to take the EPT was obtained from the undergraduate office of admission. With much help from professional contacts in South Korea and Taiwan, two international testing locations were confirmed; one in Seoul and the other in Taipei. I contacted all South Korean and Taiwanese students that were required to take the EPT, asking for volunteers to take the Online EPT. Students were informed that the results of the pilot test would yield actual scores on the written component of the EPT so that they do not have to take that part of the test when they arrive on campus. The oral part of the EPT was not a part of the pilot test.

Fourteen undergraduate (seven from South Korea and seven from Taiwan) test-takers participated in the pilot test. Feedback from proctors and test-takers present at both testing locations were taken into account when revising the O-EPT test specification. Two major changes were made: 1) elimination of file downloads, and 2) merge of three separate writing activities to one activity. In the pilot version of the O-EPT, test-takers were asked to download multiple files in PDF and Microsoft Word formats to use during the test. I made those files because those formats allowed us to create templates and use various formatting options to provide test-takers with information that they would need presented in ways that would offer the best fit. However, based on the comments from test-takers, there were many technical errors
during the downloading process and some computers did not support those file formats. The second major change was made to reduce the number of total writing activities. In the SE-EPT, there are three separate writing activities: first draft, revision, and final draft activities. However, separating those activities in the O-EPT meant that test-takers had to complete three individual quiz activities. Because the online quiz submission process made the test-taking process complex for test-takers to understand, the EPT R.A.s decided to combine the three writing activities into one activity.

Based on the comments from the 14 undergraduate test-takers, revisions were completed and a second round of pilot testing was conducted. This time, the test-takers were graduate students admitted to UIUC on limited status. These students were recruited by contacting graduate students that were already enrolled to take the On-campus EPT. The second pilot testing session was conducted in a computer lab in the Foreign Languages Building at UIUC. Despite some technical issues related to video playing, the reduction in the number of writing activities and removal of file downloads during the test seemed to have made the test-taking process simpler.

Because the design of the test was somewhat in place, it was time to consider the issue of test security and test-taker fraud. To find solutions to these issues, the EPT team had received information from the Office of Online and Continuing Education at UIUC about a live online proctoring service named ProctorU (http://www.proctoru.com/). The main benefit of implementing ProctorU would be that it would ensure the integrity of the test because test-takers would have to log in to connect with ProctorU and then through screen sharing and a web cam. The proctors would be able to monitor the test-takers and their behaviors. However, the use of
ProctorU would increase per test-taker test-taking cost. Therefore, ProctorU could not be used despite its major advantages.

**Changes and developments during the 2011-2012 school year**

Based on the feedback from the two pilot tests, the O-EPT test specification was once again revised to reflect the changes. With help from ATLAS, the production of the main O-EPT test website went under construction in Fall 2011. It was decided that the O-EPT would launch in May 2012 only for undergraduate students. The decision to offer the O-EPT only to undergraduate students was due to differences in ESL writing course placement for undergraduate and graduate students. For undergraduate students, the completion of ESL writing course sequence fulfills the Freshman Composition I requirement, which is a General Education requirement for all undergraduate students at UIUC in order to graduate. Therefore, even if an undergraduate test-taker receives the highest level in the EPT written exam, the test-taker will be required to take one composition course. In other words, even in case of misplacement, an undergraduate test-taker would be required to take at least one ESL writing course. However, for graduate students, the highest level in the EPT written exam means exemption from ESL writing courses. This means that with graduate students, there is no way to provide mandatory English language services in case of misplacement other than elective ESL courses that students can choose to take. The EPT team decided that there would be higher consequences for graduate test-takers in case of academic dishonesty; therefore, made the decision to offer the O-EPT only to undergraduate students.

Another major policy shift regarding international undergraduate students during this period was the enforcement of the EPT requirement. It was decided that all degree-seeking international undergraduate students admitted to UIUC with an ESLP flag (a term undergraduate
admissions uses to identify students that are required to take the EPT) based on the review of their admissions dossiers are now required to take the English Placement Test and complete the ESL writing sequence as recommended by the EPT results to complete their Freshmen Composition I (“Comp I”) requirement. Prior to the enforcement of the EPT, even students that were required to take the EPT could opt out of taking the EPT and complete their Comp I by taking Rhetoric or Communication courses. The decision not to complete Comp I via ESL was presumably after consultation between test-takers and their academic advisors; however, there was no campus-wide oversight to verify this. The enforcement of the ESLP flag was needed to provide the optimal English assistance to international undergraduate students. This, in turn, could also help stabilize the ESL course enrollment numbers.

The main issue to resolve before the launch of the O-EPT was test security and test-taker identity. In the previous school year, ProctorU had been considered, but due to cost per test-taker, that option was discarded. Other available online proctoring options were discussed and researched. It was decided that to ensure test integrity and security, essay topics and reading and lecture materials would not be repeated during the Online EPT. In order to add materials to the EPT item pool, the EPT Item Development Team was launched in Spring of 2012. Specific qualifications of the EPT Item Development Team can be found in APPENDIX I: EPT ITEM DEVELOPMENT TEAM QUALIFICATIONS. Four students who had previously taken EIL 460 Principles of Language Testing with Professor Fred Davidson were selected to create test materials. All test materials were made based on the EPT test specification and went through congruence checks to ensure consistency and topic appropriateness.

Initially, it was decided that the O-EPT would be offered starting the week of July 9, 2012, and ending the week of July 30, 2012. The test would be delivered in ‘windows’, meaning
timeframes that the test is up and running. Initially, two windows per week for four weeks, in other words, eight test windows were proposed by the EPT team. However, this initial plan took a drastic change after a meeting with the Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) Undergraduate Academic Affairs in March of 2012 to discuss rolling out the Online EPT for Summer of 2012. The consensus was that a much earlier rollout was necessary for academic advisors and students to have the EPT results ready for students’ advising sessions because, in general, the advising sessions would begin in early June. During the meeting, LAS Undergraduate Academic Affairs requested a mid-April rollout and asked that the test run throughout the summer. The most essential part of the request was earlier start date of the Online EPT. Therefore, the EPT team projected a launch date of April 30, 2013.

This unexpected turn of events led to sudden changes to the planning and development of the EPT. First, due to the earlier start date of the Online EPT, the hiring conventions of the main EPT R.A. changed. Prior to the launch of the Online EPT, the main EPT R.A. was hired for 11 months. Because of the increased volume of work, LAS agreed to a 12-month contract for the main EPT R.A. Second, two additional R.A.s at 25% each were hired to assist the main R.A. administer and develop the Online EPT. They were also assigned to assist in the production of an EPT validation report. The purpose of the validation report was to provide potential researchers and relevant test stakeholders with research information on the EPT to supplement the EPT Guide that was already offered on the EPT website. The validation report also prepared to anticipate and be able to answer questions about the EPT. This is in line with suggestions by Saville (2005) in test quality management literature that test developers should build an argument about the test quality standards and they should communicate with stakeholders to help them understand test results and the overall reliability of the test. Third, financial support was
provided by LAS for the EPT team to receive technical support from ATLAS (Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts & Sciences).

Much assistance was provided by ATLAS. ATLAS provided technical advising hours through Elluminate (http://www.elluminate.com/Services/Training/Elluminate_Live!/?id=418), an online, real-time collaboration environment, to provide technical assistance to test-takers. Through Elluminate, ATLAS assistants were able to exchange text messages and share applications with test-takers. The EPT R.A.s were also logged on Elluminate during technical advising hours to offer content-related expertise. ATLAS also helped the EPT team use features in Moodle effectively to be able to provide appropriate information to test-takers at various stages of the test-taking process. During an ATLAS/EPT meeting, the “Groups” and “Groupings” features in Moodle was suggested by ATLAS to be used to provide students in test windows appropriate information for varying stages in the test-taking process. Information on the use of “Groups” and “Groupings” can be found in the O-EPT test specification (see APPENDIX H: ONLINE EPT TEST SPECIFICATION).

Despite the technical assistance from ATLAS, the EPT team was not able to meet the projected launch date of April 30, 2012. In order to ensure that all the procedures are in place and complete, the EPT team decided to postpone the launch of the Online EPT to May 7, 2012. The first O-EPT test window opened at noon (US Central Time) of May 7, 2012. The 2012 O-EPT ended the week of July 30, 2012. Twelve O-EPT test windows were offered in 2012 because the O-EPT was not offered during the Fourth of July week.

When the O-EPT was launched, a major issue of the test had to do with the Oral Phase I part of the test. The Oral Phase I required test-takers to record a 3-minute response to a given question. A voice recording program which is integrated in Moodle called Wimba was used to
record the responses. ATLAS recommended the use of Wimba because it can be accessed within Moodle. Moreover, Wimba was already being used for other language placement tests on campus, which meant that resources to support the use of Wimba were already in place. The support team at ATLAS did caution the use of Wimba stating that its saving and submitting process could be somewhat counterintuitive and that some computers could have JAVA issues – but due to the lack of available recording tools, the EPT team decided on the use of Wimba for the Oral Phase I part of the O-EPT. In order to minimize the potential issues hinted by ATLAS, detailed video and written instructions on using Wimba were provided. After about 2 weeks of test administration, it was found that a large percentage of test-takers had failed to successfully submit recordings for Oral Phase I. Therefore, the Oral Phase I Practice activity was added to the test. This was a voluntary activity that test-takers were highly recommended to complete prior to the main Oral Phase I activity to check the technical requirements and test out Wimba. Despite the efforts to maximize the successful completion rate of Oral Phase I, 53% (124 out of 236) of Fall 2012 Online EPT test-takers were not able to successfully upload their recordings. Test-takers that were unable to complete the Oral Phase I were contacted to schedule interviews via Skype. Test-takers that successfully completed the Oral Phase I via Wimba or Skype received a placement of either an oral level of five (exemption from the ESL oral pronunciation course) or Phase II. Those who received a placement of Phase II were asked to schedule on-campus interviews to complete the oral section of the EPT. This was a complicated process to organize because test-takers were not fully aware of the two-phase process of the oral section of the EPT. Another challenge in administering the oral section of the O-EPT was communicating with test-takers via email. Many of them were not responsive to emails and this resulted in many delays
and missed appointments. This led the EPT and ATLAS support teams to explore other viable options to substitute Wimba for the next Online EPT session.

**Changes and developments during the 2012-2013 school year**

The Fall 2012 On-campus EPT was conducted as usual without any modifications to the number of available test dates or test format. During the Fall 2012 On-campus EPT dates, test-takers from the Online EPT that were not able to complete the Oral Phase finished the oral section of the EPT.

With respect to the ESL writing program, a major change was made to the ESL registration process by the Coordinator of ESL Writing Courses. Prior to Fall 2012, the ESL writing course registration process was known as the *pre-approval system*. Figure 11 shows the ESL writing pre-approval process.
Figure 11. ESL writing pre-approval process
The pre-approval process was used to prevent students from registering for ESL writing courses without taking the English Placement Test. Despite the accuracy of the process, due to the growth in the number of students registering for the ESL writing courses, the ESL writing program decided to dismiss the use of the pre-approval system because there was a strong demand from the undergraduate advisor for an easier and more accessible ESL writing course registration system. The new registration process, for undergraduate students, is to use the EPT placement information uploaded in Banner to limit access to ESL courses. Only students with EPT test scores could add ESL courses, and even then those students are only be able to add the courses for which their score falls within the required range. This new registration process meant that the EPT staff had to be particularly attentive to the accuracy of student information and the promptness of the score upload to ensure that students can register for their courses.

The EPT team, with the help from ATLAS, began retooling for the next Online EPT. The major objective was to find an alternative to Wimba for the Oral Phase I activity. Applications offered by the Center of Language Education and Research (CLEAR) at Michigan State University (http://clear.msu.edu/clear/index.php) were piloted for use. The Rich Internet Applications (RIA) project of CLEAR provided programs that could be utilized to provide tools teachers could use to fit their content. Based on the results of the pilot, it was decided that Conversations 2.1 of RIA would be used for the next Online EPT because the tool allowed for users to create video prompts for their students and automatically save students’ responses onto a central server. Conversations 2.1 interface could be easily embedded in Moodle activities and was free of charge (see Figure 12).
This tool also allowed the option of downloading student responses, which could be potentially beneficial for rater training purposes. Moreover, in order to force test-takers to practice using the recording tool, a prerequisite practice activity was added to the Oral Phase I activity. Test-takers were required to complete a practice activity prior to proceeding to take the actual Oral Phase I activity. If a test-taker had not completed the practice activity, a message would appear, prompting the test-taker.

In order to deal with the issue of test security, the EPT Item Development Team was once again assembled to create new essay materials for the EPT in Spring 2013. Specific qualifications and work details stayed the same as the previous year.
A major difference in the delivery of test materials was in the mini lecture section of the Online EPT. In the previous year, the voice of the mini lecture was the EPT faculty supervisor. This year, the EPT team hired an undergraduate student in the Department of Theater to be the voice of the mini lecture videos. The purpose of recruiting a trained voice talent was, despite the fact that regular people can be suitable voices for recording purposes, professionally trained voice talents generally have clear enunciation (Buck, 2001). Furthermore, the recruitment of a professional voice talent could set a precedent on the professional standards of EPT test development process. I developed guidelines for the Online EPT test specification about recruiting and directing the voice talent (see APPENDIX H: ONLINE EPT TEST SPECIFICATION).

After the retooling of the Online EPT, Online EPT 2013 started on June 3, 2013 and was administered for 10 weeks, the final week of online testing being the week of August 12, 2013. The 2013 O-EPT end date was set 2 weeks later compared to the end date of the previous year. This decision was based on requests from undergraduate academic advisors who wanted the Online EPT test dates to be available closer to the start of instruction for more students to be able to take the test online.

Once the Online EPT 2013 started, the main problem was, once again, regarding the Oral Phase I activity. Many test-takers had technical problems with the Conversation 2.1 tool. Conversation 2.1 was built on the Adobe Flash Platform and most of the reported technical problems were related to Adobe Flash plugin. Because only one attempt was allowed in the Oral Phase I activity, once a test-taker encountered a problem, it was already too late to fix the problem. One hundred seventy-two test-takers re-took the Oral Phase I via Skype. This process
stayed the same as the previous year. Approximately 64% (172 out of 269) of the total number of Online EPT 2013 test-takers had technical problems with the Oral Phase I activity.

The technical issues of the Oral Phase I still remains an important project to handle, either by changing the oral recording tool or by revising the entire approach of collecting speech samples from test-takers.

**Discussion of the Mandate Map**

The EPT went through many administrative changes, which mainly affected the test delivery format and the score reporting process.

**Test delivery format change.** The development of the Online EPT was a major change in the third era of the EPT, as the test was altered to meet a new purpose, which can be considered as an *upgrade retrofit*, “the purpose of which is to make an existing test more suitable for its original stated purpose, by ensuring that it meets new or evolving standards, or uses new technologies to make the test more efficient” (Fulcher and Davidson, 2010, p.124). The basic construct of the EPT and its original model remained the same for the Online EPT. The only change was in the delivery mode, hence, the Online EPT is considered to be the second part in the third era, but not a fourth era.

The new mandate to develop a pre-arrival EPT was the motivation for creating the Online EPT, using Moodle. The current third era of EPT went through several upgrade retrofits, from the Regular EPT to the Enhanced EPT, to the Semi-Enhanced EPT, and now the Online
EPT (see Figure 13).

**Figure 13.** Process of upgrade retrofit within the third era of the EPT

This upgrade retrofit process was the first time the test delivery method of the EPT changed. Three previous versions of the EPT were all paper-and-pencil tests that the students had to take on campus, in a supervised classroom situation. The Online EPT was completely administered electronically, and students could take the test at a location of their choice. This computerized version of the Online EPT would be a positive change as it reflected the writing behaviors of current writers. More and more writing is done on a word processor, and therefore, due to convenience in editing and revising on computers, the Online EPT may be a more authentic method of testing writing.

**External mandate as the motivation for change.** Another difference in the upgrade retrofit of the Online EPT is the mandate. Previously, the EPT was upgraded to new versions based on research projects or internal administrative purposes. In other words, the previous mandate for change was mostly internal. However, this upgrade was due to an external mandate that came largely from academic advisors of undergraduate students. This mandate also changed
the role of and consequences for the EPT. It was now used to function as a peripheral assessment tool to provide additional support for international undergraduate students, because the number of undergraduate test-takers was very small. However, the surge in numbers of undergraduate international students, coupled with the need to receive their scores earlier, provided the external mandate that led to a this new step in the history of the EPT— that is, to serve a much larger population. This was also evidence to support the claim that the EPT had developed to play a substantially more significant role in the advising and instruction of undergraduate students. Due to these changes in undergraduate demographics, the EPT grew to have more influence on student advising and course selection.

This change happened not only in the test delivery format, but also the score reporting process. Only about 100 undergraduate students took the EPT, which meant that even fewer numbers took undergraduate ESL writing courses. The number of undergraduate students has increased by approximately 300%, and because of the mandate to enforce the EPT requirement most of them are taking ESL writing courses. Because the EPT is reaching a larger population, score reporting had to be sent to additional stakeholders in addition to becoming more efficient and accurate. This revision of the score reporting procedure has increased the steps involved in processing scores, but it has simplified the ESL writing registration process.

New research agenda. The development and launch of the Online EPT has given rise to new research agendas for the EPT. First, the technical issues related to Oral Phase I should be studied, as this problem is the primary reason the completion of the Online EPT score processing is time consuming and complicated. This also increases workload in relation to rating, as it adds a step in procuring test-takers’ speech samples.
The second research agenda item is related to the essay characteristics of the paper-and-pencil writing test and the computerized writing test. Previous research has suggested that there are differences in writing patterns while using varying writing tools. Moreover, different writing formats could affect rater behavior. More research should be conducted to examine the test constructs of computerized and paper-and-pencil writing in the UIUC EPT context. Such research could increase test validity and reliability of the EPT.
CHAPTER VI
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2 AND 3

Research questions two and three are related to feedback from the main stakeholders of the EPT. The two questions are:

2. How would program effectiveness and application of the test interventions found therein be evaluated?
   
   2.1. Who were the affected stakeholders due to test intervention? How were they affected?
   
   2.2. How were the ESL writing program, the undergraduate Rhetoric program, Department of Communications, the undergraduate academic advisors, and the Writers Workshop influenced by the changes?
   
3. How effective and accommodating are the policy changes and EPT/ESL changes to UG students and advisors?

The second research question was investigated through program director interviews. The five programs were selected because they either provide Composition 1 writing instruction or assistance to international undergraduate students or help students register for Composition 1 writing courses. The third research question was examined through two surveys, one for students and the second for advisors. The questions asked them about their satisfaction and awareness about the Online EPT and other policy changes. Furthermore, I gathered comments and suggestions from the two major stakeholders of the EPT.

Interview Analysis

The purpose of the interviews was to find out more about how various UIUC units that advise international undergraduate students on their composition 1 requirement and provide writing assistance were affected by the international student surge. Furthermore, I wanted
investigate how for some relevant programs, the launch of the Online EPT and EPT-related policy changes influenced their programs. I met individually with five program directors to get their perspectives on the changes that they have seen in their programs since 2008. Table 11 provides information on the interviewees that were selected for interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Current Position</th>
<th>Goal of Program</th>
<th>Main duties in the position</th>
<th>Length of employment at UIUC (years)</th>
<th>Length of employment in current position (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>Director of the ESL program</td>
<td>- Provide students with English training and support to be successful in other classes</td>
<td>- Provide students with English training and support to be successful in other classes</td>
<td>- Oversea activities in the ESL program including, but not limited to budget, course planning, and training</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Current Position</td>
<td>Goal of Program</td>
<td>Main duties in the position</td>
<td>Length of employment at UIUC (years)</td>
<td>Length of employment in current position (years)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mark      | Executive assistant dean in the Student Academic Affairs Office of Liberal Arts and Sciences | - Help students in understand and apply academic regulations  
- Support students in handling issues affecting their academic success | - Administrative role regarding student records (graduation requirements, course matriculation process, etc.)  
- Supervise all college-level advising | 18 | 2 |
| Tom       | Associate director of the Undergraduate Rhetoric Program | - Provide general education course called Composition 1 which is a requirement for all undergraduate student | - Supervise the day to day activities of the Rhetoric program  
- Develop training for the instructors and implement policies that have been designed by the director | 5 | 5 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Main duties in the position</th>
<th>Length of employment at UIUC (years)</th>
<th>Length of employment in current position (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Course director of Communication</td>
<td>- Help students become competent college writers, researchers, and speakers</td>
<td>- Supervise the hiring, training, and mentoring of TAs and full-time lecturers - Manage training of technological resources and oversee course manual - Promote courses to academic advisors to maintain high enrollment in courses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Director of the Writers Workshop</td>
<td>- Support writing across campus</td>
<td>- Direct the Writers Workshop and hire and train of consultants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The program director interview comprised of questions that asked for mostly descriptive information in five areas.

1. Interviewee’s work experience at UIUC and main duties: To provide evidence on the person’s relevance to the research
2. Program’s goals and number of students it serves (including international student numbers)
3. Changes, if any, the program has seen due to the surge of international students and how it dealt with those changes: This includes training and support from the University.
4. Effect of the Online EPT and relevant policy changes regarding Composition 1 courses on the program
5. Suggestions for the EPT program and any future plans for the program

The ESL Program

The Director of ESL Program Interview – Ross. The UIUC ESL program offers several courses in English to international undergraduate and graduate students. The ESL program provides courses in three areas: writing (undergraduate and graduate), pronunciation (undergraduate and graduate), and international teaching assistance (graduate). The ESL program director, Ross, has been working in the position for 8 years. As the Director of the ESL program, he works with budget, number of classes, staff hiring and training, and other ESL-relevant matters. He explained that the purpose of the ESL program, in particular, the ESL writing course, is to provide students with writing training and support in academic and professional writing contexts. The ESL program offers courses on oral pronunciation and instruction designed for international teaching assistants, but the focus of this interview was primarily the ESL writing
courses for undergraduate students. The writing program serves about 1,000 international undergraduate and graduate students per semester. According to Ross, the international student surge has had a significant effect on the program. The ESL program was notified about the surge about 3 weeks before the classes started in Fall 2008. This was also the semester the newly appointed Coordinator of the ESL writing courses started; therefore, the beginning of semester planning for the program at that time was extremely busy. For Fall 2009, the program and the double the number of sections. Since then, the ESL enrollment numbers increased steadily but sharply. Ross mentioned that when he started working as the director, the number of ESL writing courses per semester was around 10 to 15. In Fall 2013, the ESL program offered approximately 60 sections.

The main challenge in dealing with the surge for his program was that they never knew long ahead the accurate number of students that needed to take the EPT and the ESL courses. They could not find out how many international students were coming to ESL or going to the Rhetoric program (RHET). This affected their hiring and course preparation. However, the numbers started to level out due to the improvements in communication with other Composition programs, primarily RHET, and undergraduate admissions. Once the program started receiving estimated student numbers from the ESLP list from undergraduate admissions, it was much easier for them to plan ahead.

Because of the surge, the ESL program had to hire more staff and made changes to the curriculum for parallel with RHET and other composition courses. The previous ESL 114-115 course sequence was changed to the ESL 111-112 sequence and ESL 115 became a standalone, 4-credit hour course to fulfill the Composition 1 requirement. In other words, the EPT placement into 111 (formerly 114) stipulates completion of 111 and 112, whereas a placement into ESL 115
means that Comp I can be fulfilled in a single semester. Furthermore, to better development materials for the new course sequence, the program began a teaching material archive where TAs and lecturers are expected to add to every semester.

Ross explained that the Online EPT was developed because remote testing was demanded by the campus, especially academic advisors, but, somehow, students are not taking the Online EPT at anywhere near the level that they should be. If students do not take the Online EPT but are attending pre-arrival advising sessions, they could be scheduling all the other courses first and ESL has to later find a spot in their schedules, so it is not a balanced process. Even though he did observe a small increase in the number of students registering for ESL writing classes early, the Online EPT has not substantially helped the EPT writing course registration process. This is because the Online EPT test-taker numbers are not as high as initially anticipated. Ross wanted the campus to send out a strong worded message out to incoming international students that are required to take the EPT to highly encourage them to take the Online EPT. According to Ross, the stakeholders most affected by the changes in the EPT were the advising community and the ESL program, the biggest benefactor being the advising community. As for the ESL program, the decision to enforce the EPT requirement to students has been beneficial, but because there is no native-speaker equivalent for ESL 110 (oral pronunciation course), it cannot be a required course. He suggests that given our current population, the campus needs to re-evaluate the relevance of ESL 110 because pronunciation instruction can positively affect international students. Moreover, he said that campus needs to do some serious “academic soul searching” on how to meet the needs of these international students.

Ross had some suggestions for the future of the EPT, such as using testing centers abroad and analyzing ways to place students into ESL courses based on other standardized test scores.
At the moment, for the ESL program, the EPT seems to be doing what it is supposed to, which is accurately placing students into ESL courses. The primary concern for the program is getting undergraduate students to take the Online EPT.

Lastly, he mentioned that the kind of support that the ESL program received from the campus due to the surge of international students was a minimal permanent budget increase which is not substantial enough to meet the actual budget. Ross clarified that the program had to request extra funding each year since the increase. He mentioned that there are some committees on campus that discuss international student matters that do not include members from the Department of Linguistics or the ESL program and he feels that at times, the ESL program is underrepresented at campus level.

**Undergraduate Advising Community**

**Interview with the Executive Assistant Dean in the Student Academics Affairs**

**Office of LAS – Mark.** The Student Academic Affairs Office of LAS handles academic and records related regulations and issues to support students’ academic success. Mark, the Executive Assistant Dean of the unit has an important administrative role regarding student records and advising. At the time of the international student surge, Mark had been working as an advisor in the Rhetoric department and had been participating in a “Critical Courses Meeting” hosted by the Provost office during Summer of 2008. Mark explained that he was informed of the surge in the number of international students at this meeting by the associate dean of LAS. The associate dean at the time mentioned during the meeting whether anyone had informed the ESL program about the surge, but no one had. He explained that that was how the ESL program was notified of the surge. Because of his connections with advisors across campus, he became the communication and liaison between ESL/EPT and advisors.
Regarding the Online EPT, the main concern Mark had was while the Online EPT had made a difference in advising students, he had wished that the number of students taking the test would be higher because the EPT was prepared to accommodate more students. Online EPT did help advisors get EPT results much earlier than before and they have been able to get more students enrolled in ESL courses. Also, the enforcement of the EPT requirement is being embraced by the advising community and is making a big difference in advising. However, it is just that the Online EPT test-taker numbers are much smaller than they had wished. The number of Online EPT test-takers from 2012 to 2013 has not increased significantly even though the EPT made some date changes in 2013 to meet the academic advisors’ requests by offering more tests in August. Mark expressed his frustration and disappointment in the numbers. He believes that communication efforts to get students to take the Online EPT do not seem to be working as it should or had expected. He expressed concerns about the numbers and its relation to virtual advising. Virtual advising is a not requirement for students, but in reality, it is, because if incoming students do not do virtual advising, they cannot register until August. If, in fact, an international incoming student attends virtual advising without an EPT score, the advisor should inform the student to take the Online EPT, which could eventually lead to more students taking the Online EPT. However, based on Mark’s personal communications with advisors, many find virtual advising cumbersome and some are still struggling with virtual advising. Another reason behind the low numbers could be the stigma attached to ESL so students want to avoid ESL and take RHET courses. However, this option has now been shut down via course enrollment controls because of the enforcement. Mark thinks that the enforcement of EPT and the re-arrangement of the ESL courses (ESL 111 & 112 sequence and credit hour change for ESL 115) seem to be a step towards the right decision.
Mark said that there has not been much difference in training academic advisors to deal with the international student surge. What they have done is equip them with better information concerning international students. EPT information sessions at advisor meetings have helped in that aspect. He feels that the word “academic” should be stressed for academic advisors because he thinks that they should be able to provide guidance to students not only to meet the graduation requirements but also that are academic in nature. They should be able to think about the quality of the academic experience for their advisees.

Mark’s additional concern about EPT/ESL was that even though the University wants international students to get the full US college experience, the EPT could be segregating them from domestic students. Right from the start, international students have to take the EPT that puts them into ESL courses that separate them with domestic students. Mark thinks that this may have to do with international students’ general English proficiency. Some international students are not proficient in oral skills and grammar and the current ESL service courses do not directly address these issues. The problem of general English proficiency is a concern for him as well as advisors. Many international students tend to congregate in certain disciplines, like the STEM fields and Economics which may not require high language load. If the University is going to continue to accept international students at this level and claim that we are providing a particular level of training for these students for them to succeed in professional environments, Mark feels that the current English language instruction that the University offers is not enough to help these students. The current ESL service courses are writing classes that do not focus on general English proficiency. He feels that language proficiency is at the heart of students’ success in the programs. Even though the issue of getting international undergraduate students to take the EPT and get them into ESL courses is getting solved, but the more important issue of “are the students
getting what they need?” should still be researched. Furthermore, a solution to the general proficiency issue could be ESL transition courses that other universities offer, but this could slow down the process of students getting the degree. He also suggested that for ESL, it may make more sense for them to, instead of being in the Composition 1 business, eventually get into the English preparatory area to better prepare international students for success in college.

**Undergraduate Rhetoric Program (RHET)**

**Interview with the Associate Director of the Undergraduate Rhetoric Program – Tom.** The Undergraduate Rhetoric Program provides course sequences that fulfill the Composition 1 requirement, which is a General Education requirement for all undergraduate students. Tom, the Associate Director of RHET helps supervise the day to day activities of the RHET program. Within that, he helps develop training for instructors and implement policies that have been designed by the director. According to Tom, the RHET program serves around 1,700 to 1,800 students per semester and in Fall 2013, the program had approximately 450 international students, which is about 26%. Presence of international students in RHET has led to several changes in the program. First, they have been offering more training and professional development support for their instructors. During summer orientation, they offer a short workshop on instructing multicultural students and English Language Learners. Second, they offer an in-house rhetoric tutor program. The tutor program is staffed with one or more tutors per semester and they are available to any one of their RHET 105 students. This service is one-on-one and students can make appointments to meet with the tutor. This program is offered to all students, but it is a particularly useful resource for international students. In order to better support international students, the program has interacted with the Department of Linguistics for
the last few years about how to advise or provide support for the international students in RHET. They have also partnered with the Writers Workshop in the library.

Over the past five years, RHET has seen a decrease in the number of international students in their Composition 1 courses. Tom said that since 2008, the increase in presence of international students in RHET has skyrocketed. However, because of recent efforts to communicate with international students and advise them better has decreased the number of students that end up in RHET. He thinks that those mandates have led many international students to take ESL courses offered by Linguistics. For the RHET program, the EPT test, in particular, the Online EPT and the mandate that enforces students to take ESL courses has steered many of the international students to appropriate composition classes in Linguistics. However, he still saw students who do not have sufficient standardized test scores who are enrolled in RHET 105 and it is difficult to figure out how that happened.

Tom believes that to better manage the increase of international students, RHET and ESL programs should continue to communicate to share information. It would be ideal if some teaching materials or strategies could be shared between the two programs, such as course observations, for an exchange of knowledge in the two programs. He also wanted to research some ways that they could implement to trace down students without sufficient test scores that get into RHET courses.

Department of Communication (CMN)

Interview with the Course Director of Communication – Emily. The Department of Communication offers the CMN 111-112 sequence to fulfill the Composition 1 requirement. The CMN sequence focuses on principles and practices in communication, with emphasis on communication and argument through writing and speaking. The outcomes that the sequence
seeks are that students become competent college writers, researchers and speakers who can identify and critique other’s arguments and produce arguments that are persuasive and effective. Emily, the Course Director of Communication, manages the hiring, training, and mentoring of staff and reviews and selects course materials. The department serves approximately 575 students per year. Her program experienced the international student surge later than other programs. According to Emily, the increase in the number of international students in CMN came in 2011. The department had not been informed about the surge in the international students. Before the surge, the CMN courses only had about one or two international students in one section. In 2011, there were four to five international students in each section and many international students in her department were not prepared to be in the courses because of limited English proficiency. Emily said that at that time, they are not prepared to serve these students. Therefore, in the 2012-2013 school year, CMN temporarily did not allow international students with low English proficiency in their courses. During this school year, the program prepared ESL course materials and equipped its TAs with appropriate training tailored for non-native speakers of English. In 2013, the department welcomed international students back into their courses. She thinks that the decision to enforce the EPT requirement via course enrollment controls has helped the CMN department stabilize their enrollment of international students. To serve this new demographic of students in the department, she added ESL-targeted materials in the course handbook and discussed with TAs on how to get students to interact with one another and mix up students during group work for cultural exchange. The CMN department conducts first week diagnostic exams to make sure that enrolled students are accurately placed. Now that her department is better prepared, she said that she enjoys having international students in her courses because they bring in diversity. Because her courses are discussion-based, she
commented that international students offer different perspectives on current affairs and have bring a wider range of discussion topics to classes.

Emily mentioned that she had received no prior information or support from the University regarding the influx of international students. She said that because of the diversity that international students offer, her program benefitted from their experiences, but she wishes that she had known about the surge to better equip her program. Accurate and timely information about the surge would have been helpful.

**Writers Workshop (WW)**

**Interview with the Director of the Writers Workshop – Mary.** The Writers Workshop is part of the Center for Writing Studies at UIUC. WW provides writing assistance across campus. WW’s primary goal is to offer individual support to help students which can encourage instructors to use more writing in their courses. Mary, as the Director of WW, is responsible for hiring and training of consultants. She also manages the operations of WW and liaises with campus units to improve writing for all students. In 2012, WW had approximately 6,100 visits and 78% of all visits in 2012 were by international students. Mary said that the percentage of international graduate students has been stable, but recently, noticeable increase was in the undergraduate population. This could be due to the overall increase in the number of international undergraduate students on campus, but it could also be due to the “peer consulting” program in which trained undergraduate student consultants work with other undergraduate students. Because of the peer consulting program, WW has been able to assist more undergraduate students, so their undergraduate numbers have increased overall, both native and non-native speakers of English.
Mary said that the idea of tutoring non-native speakers of English is often challenging to new consultants because they are afraid that they will not be able to help them with their problems. That is why during training, she helps her consultants understand non-native speaker writing issues. Graduate student consultants have a two-day orientation before classes start and about 3 hours of that is devoted to non-native speaking writers with the video “Writing across borders”. They also read articles from the writing center literature about working with ESL writers. Peer writing consultants go through a semester of training through a class that meets once a week and two or three classes are devoted assisting ESL writers. She commented that she is not able to generalize about what happens in sessions with international students because each session is tailored to each student so each session is unique.

Mary mentioned because of the uniqueness of each session, consulting practices is not expected to change because of the increase of international students. Instead, WW has taken interest in how the increase has affected other units on campus. WW has started a project where writing groups of about eight international students met for four sessions to discuss their writings led by a facilitator. The rationale for this is to show international students ways to receive help on their writings other than making appointments at WW. These groups are also held in languages other than English which is expected to encourage more discussion and exploration of metacognitive issues. Also, WW holds sessions during TA orientations on responding to student writings, including those of ESL writers. WW has also held workshops for front desk staff on communicating with international students. Mary said that there was a need for this outreach because other units were not offering it. She said that all units on campus, like the counseling center and career center, not just those providing language or writing instruction, were affected.
by the surge of international students, so WW has tried to be a place that can help these units better communicate with international students.

**Student Survey Analysis**

**Student survey demographics.** The student survey was conducted to investigate the effects of the policy changes and the launch of the Online EPT. The main survey was sent out via email to 2,405 EPT undergraduate test-takers from Fall 2009 to Fall 2013. Some email addresses that the EPT RA had on file were inaccurate, so approximately 500 emails were undeliverable. Furthermore, because the students were asked to log on to the survey using their UIUC NetIDs to avoid multiple submissions, many test-takers that had graduated were unable to respond to the survey. Information about the survey was also included in the UIUC Korean Student Association’s Career School e-Newsletter which was distributed to 80 undergraduate students from Korea. Representatives of the UIUC Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) were contacted but I was unable to reach them. A total of 211 students responded to the survey but two responses had to be removed because the responses the student provided were incoherent. Therefore, 209 responses were analyzed from the survey (a response rate of 10%).

Of the 209 student survey participants, 61.2% (n = 128) were admitted as degree-seeking freshmen, 34.0% (n = 71) were admitted as degree-seeking transfers, and 4.8% (n = 10) were admitted as non-degree exchange students. The participants represented all 8 undergraduate colleges and the Division of General Studies. Majority of the participants (96.2%, n = 201) identified themselves as international students whose first language is not English and 44.0% (n = 92) had not attended schools that used English as the language of instruction prior to enrolling in UIUC. Approximately 70% (n = 144) respondents were from China, which is consistent with the ratio of Chinese students among the international undergraduate population at UIUC.
Comparison of the student survey participant demographics and the EPT undergraduate test-taker population from Fall 2009 until Fall 2013 is shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*Comparison of the student survey participant demographics and the EPT undergraduate test-taker population from Fall 2009 until Fall 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>EPT test-taker population</th>
<th>Student survey demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree-seeking</td>
<td>83.7% (N=2012)</td>
<td>95.2% (N=199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>16.3% (N=393)</td>
<td>4.8% (N=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>66.0% (N=1565)</td>
<td>68.9% (N=144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>9.7% (N=231)</td>
<td>8.6% (N=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>5.1% (N=121)</td>
<td>6.2% (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19.2% (N=456)</td>
<td>16.3% (N=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>42.3% (N=1016)</td>
<td>42.6% (N=89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>23.5% (N=566)</td>
<td>20.1% (N=42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of General Studies</td>
<td>16.2% (N=390)</td>
<td>18.7% (N=39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>18.0% (N=432)</td>
<td>18.6% (N=39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Total number of undergraduate EPT test-takers was 2405 from Fall 2009 until Fall 2013. Of the 2405 test-takers, 32 test-takers did not specify their native countries and 1 test-taker did not specify his/her college.

As can be seen from Table 12, the survey demographic can be considered to be representative of the undergraduate EPT test-taker population.
The survey was particularly interested in finding out students’ satisfaction of the EPT in three major parts:

1. EPT/ESL requirement communication
2. Taking the EPT and Composition 1 courses
3. EPT/ESL information access, communication, and registration process.

**EPT/ESL requirement communication.** When asked, to the best of their knowledge if they were required to take the English Placement Test when they were admitted to UIUC, 76.1% (n = 159) said “yes,” 19.1% (n = 40) said “no,” and 4.8% (n = 10) said “I don’t know.” Of the 159 students that said that they were required to take the EPT, when they were asked to check all the ways that they used to found out that they were required to take the EPT, letter of admission was the most frequently used source of information (37.9%, n = 85). The email from the English Placement Test office was the second most used source (29.9%, n = 67), which was followed by information from academic advisors (20.1%, n = 45). The percentage of students that responded that friends told them about the requirement was 11.2% (n = 25). Another source of information was the information on the undergraduate admissions website (0.9%, n = 2). Three official channels of information which are letter of admission, email from the EPT office, and information from academic advisors were the main sources of information (87.9%, n = 197) that students used to find out about the EPT requirement. However, it is interesting to note that more than 10% identified friends as a source of information, which is evidence for the importance of peer advising among international undergraduate students. It is difficult to find out if the information that students received from friends were accurate, but it appears to be one of the main sources of advising.
For the question which asked whether it was easy or difficult to find out if they were required to take the EPT, 58.8% (n = 123) found that it was easy to find out their EPT requirement whereas 15.4% (n = 32) responded that it was difficult to find out about the requirement.

When asked about the clarity of information regarding why they were required to take the EPT, the responses were somewhat mixed; 33.0% (n = 69) of respondents answered that the reason was somewhat clearly explained (see Figure 14).

![Figure 14. Was the information regarding why you were required to take the EPT clearly explained?](image)

The best source of advice when determining how to fulfill the Freshman Composition 1 requirement was the academic advisor (50%, n = 105). Thirty-seven students (17.6%) said that they did not receive advice on choosing their Freshman Composition 1 course. Even though it
was only 12.4% (n = 26), some students chose their friends or other students as best source of advice (see Figure 15).

![Pie chart showing sources of advice](chart.png)

*Figure 15. When determining how to fulfill your Freshman Composition 1 requirement, what has been your best source of advice?*

Forty percent of students (n = 96) that responded to the question on whether they contacted anyone requesting information about the EPT requirement said that they did not contact anyone for information. Of those that did ask someone requesting information about the EPT requirement, 31.3% (n = 75) said that they contacted their academic advisors, 21.7% (n = 52) said that they contacted the EPT office, and 5.8% (n = 14) said that they contacted the office of admission. This shows that survey participants relied mostly on advice from their academic advisors, which should be the contacts for questions regarding their academic requirements.
Students’ overall satisfaction regarding the communication regarding the EPT requirement was mostly positive (see Figure 16).

![Pie chart showing student satisfaction levels]

*Figure 16. How would you rate your overall satisfaction regarding the communication with UIUC regarding your EPT requirement?*

Comments that students provided regarding the communication regarding their EPT requirement provided insight into how the university can send information about the EPT requirement. One suggested that the admissions office should send an e-mail reminding the student of the EPT requirement after the student accepts the offer instead of just writing it on the second page of letter of admission. Other students wanted more information on why they were required to take the EPT, some claiming that it was not clear as to why they had to take the EPT even after they had completed their Freshman Composition 1 requirement at a community college prior to admission.
The results of the EPT/ESL communication satisfaction showed that even though most of the survey participants were satisfied with the communication regarding the EPT requirement, the university should consider providing students with information on factors that contribute to students receiving the EPT requirement. This clarity could reduce some of the doubts that students have about the EPT requirement and confusion about whether they should take the test. This could encourage students to take the EPT in a timely manner, well before their initial meeting with their advisors.

**Taking the EPT and Composition 1 courses.** The survey participants were asked whether they had taken the English Placement Test. Of the total student survey participants, 95.7% (n = 200) said that they had taken the test. Out of the 200 that had taken the EPT, 41.5% (n = 83) said that they took the Online EPT. Of the students that were admitted to UIUC when the Online EPT option was available and took the EPT (n = 122), only 13.1% (n = 16) said that they took the Online EPT. Only 22.6% (n = 24) of the 106 students that took the On-campus EPT even when the Online EPT was available said that they had been aware of the online option. When asked why they were unable to take the Online EPT, one student commented that he/she was worried about having technical issues while taking the Online EPT and one student said that he/she had to take the On-campus EPT because the student did have technical problems taking the test online. Those that were unaware of the Online EPT at the time later found out about the EPT when it was too late to take the test online. However, the main reason that students were unable to take the Online EPT was that they were unaware of the option.

Figure 17 shows the EPT placement results of the survey participants.
Figure 17. Based on your performance on the written exam of the EPT, what was your initial writing placement?

Although 200 survey respondents said that they took the EPT, 190 provided their initial EPT writing placement (see Figure 17). Table 13 shows the ESL writing course average grade of respondents that provided their course grade for the course(s) that they took.

Table 13

**ESL Writing Average Course Grade by Initial EPT Placement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>ESL 111 (or 114)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>ESL 115</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 114</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 115</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=D, 2=C, 3=B, 4=A
The average grades for ESL writing courses were around the A- to A range. The average grade for students that took non-ESL composition course was relatively lower. Only 12 survey participants stated as having completed RHET 105 to complete the Freshman Composition 1 requirement. The mean grade for RHET was 3.42 (n = 12, SD = 0.51), which is around the B+ to A- range. None of the respondents stated that they had taken CMN courses to fulfill the Composition 1 requirement. One student who took RHET despite having taken the EPT commented,

I think attending an English class with native speaker students being taught English writing techniques works very well to me. When I learned that I was placed to 114, I was quite disappointed about the news. But it later got proved that I enjoyed the class when the instructor treated all of us as native speakers and instead of learning grammars and writing models, we explored further on various topics and were trained to express ourselves better based on understanding over the topics.

This shows that some students feel that they are linguistically ready and they might benefit from taking RHET courses, despite the EPT requirement. Information about the objective of the UIUC Rhetoric (RHET) courses was discussed in the interview results section for better understanding of the program objectives of the Rhetoric program and how they differ from ESL writing courses.

Also, it seems that other students consider ESL writing courses as conditional courses – something that they have to test out of based on the EPT to go to RHET or CMN. Another student stated, “If I score high enough on EPT, maybe I can place out of ESL courses and take other courses such as Rhetoric105, but there is not an option, I have to take at least ESL115.”
This could be due to misunderstanding among some international undergraduate students who think that UIUC ESL courses are similar to English language transition or bridge programs at other universities. These conditional admission programs are for students who meet the university academic requirements but do not have sufficient language skills. This misinterpretation of ESL could be because some students who are labeled as needing English language instruction interpret such support as stigmatized by classification as an ESL student. Some students categorized as being ESL students at UIUC may have had prior educational experience at institutions using English as the medium of instruction. These students may feel that they should not be placed differently from other US high school graduates. This could explain the mostly negative comments from the survey participants regarding their experiences taking the EPT and the ESL courses.

**EPT/ESL information access, communication, and registration process.** This part of the student survey asked students to rate their overall satisfaction with the quality of the EPT information, EPT registration and score viewing process, ESL writing courses information and registration process, and the quality of communication with various campus units regarding their EPT requirements.

I investigated the international undergraduate students’ satisfaction of the available information and the process of registering for the EPT and the ESL writing courses and viewing EPT results. Table 14 shows the results of their satisfaction.
Table 14

Satisfaction of information about EPT and ESL courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The information about the EPT on the EPT website</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EPT registration process</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease of viewing EPT results</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information about the ESL writing courses on the</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ESL writing courses registration process</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The response scale was as follows: 1 = Not at all satisfied, 2 = Not very satisfied, 3 = Somewhat satisfied, 4 = Extremely satisfied

The results show that, overall, students are somewhat satisfied with the available information about the EPT and the ESL courses. Some comments that students suggested had to do with the time it took to receive proficiency credit for ESL 114 for students that were directly placed into ESL 115 based on the EPT. However, the issue was solved by re-sequencing the ESL writing courses. Previously, ESL 114 and 115 were each worth 3 credit hours. At UIUC, a student needs to get at least 4 hours of credit in composition to fulfill the Freshman Composition 1 requirement, so if a student placed into and completed ESL 115, the student would get only 3 credit hours, which is not enough to complete the composition requirement. Therefore, the ESL program would have to offer 3 hours of ESL 114 proficiency credits, but this process took a long time. Starting Fall 2013, ESL writing courses were re-sequenced. ESL 115 is now worth 4 credit hours so if a student was placed into ESL 115, the student would not need to receive ESL 114 proficiency credits to fulfill the composition requirement. A student that placed into ESL 111
(formerly ESL 114) would need to complete the two-course sequence, ESL 111-ESL 112, to fulfill the Freshman Composition 1 requirement. ESL 111 and 112 are worth 3 credit hours each. This change allowed students to fulfill their Freshman Composition 1 requirement through ESL writing courses without having to receive proficiency credits. Furthermore, because of the separation of ESL 111/112 and ESL 115, the course materials can now be better suited to meet the needs of student based on whether they needed the two-course or the single-course sequence.

Students also wanted more information on how the EPT essays were rated; “I couldn't come up with any idea since I do not know how it is graded at all. But, anyway, I do not think my EPT score was not [sic] a true reflection of my English writing/speaking ability. Sorry.”

Even though the EPT provides the grading benchmark through the EPT Guide which is available on the EPT website, it seems that students may be unaware of the availability. There might be a need for more transparency in the kinds of information that are available in the EPT Guide, which could encourage students to read more about the test. A student that had taken the Online EPT remarked on the technical issues while taking the test by saying, “Please upgrade the system for Online EPT. I encountered some technical issues while doing it, like the video is not loaded even my system are satisfied with the requirements.” Technical problems during the Online EPT had caused some students to re-attempt the Online EPT, re-take the Oral Phase I via Skype or on-campus, or re-take the test on-campus to avoid such technical problems. This comment can be related to other comments from the survey where some students said that they chose to take the On-campus EPT despite being aware of the online version because they were worried about potential internet issues.
In the final section of the student survey, I examined students’ overall satisfaction with the quality of communication with specific UIUC units about their EPT requirement. Table 15 shows the results.

Table 15  
*Satisfaction of the quality of communication regarding the EPT requirement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of admission</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisor</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL personnel</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPT personnel</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The response scale was as follows: 1 = Not at all satisfied, 2 = Not very satisfied, 3 = Somewhat satisfied, 4 = Extremely satisfied

Overall, students seem to be satisfied with the communication that they had with different campus units. There were still areas for improvement. For instance, in the previous section of the survey, it was found that many students that were required to take the EPT were not aware of the Online EPT. Moreover, there was a lack of clarity as to why students were required to take the test. In spite of the fact that students were satisfied with the quality of communication regarding the EPT requirement, there is still room for improvement in regard to clarity and accuracy.

**Academic Advisor Survey Analysis**

The academic advisor survey was conducted to study how the policy changes regarding international undergraduate students’ Freshmen Composition 1 requirement and the application of the Online EPT affected them. The pilot survey was conducted prior to the main survey. The
participants of the pilot survey were recruited through my personal contact from my work as the EPT RA. One advisor responded to the pilot survey and based on the results of the pilot, I revised the survey to add several questions to get some follow-up explanations to questions regarding. The academic advisor pilot and main survey questions can be found in APPENDIX F: ACADEMIC ADVISOR SURVEY. The survey was sent out via the UIUC Advisor Listserv to reach all UIUC academic advisors. In total, 25 undergraduate academic advisors responded to the survey. Because the advisor survey was sent out through the UIUC academic advisor listserv, it was difficult to find out the total number of advisors that received this survey.

**Academic advisor survey demographics.** The 25 academic advisors that participated in the survey were from six undergraduate colleges, the Division of General Studies, and the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics/Academics. Table 16 outlines the number of survey participants from different units.
Table 16

Advisor Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College or Division</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Intercollegiate Athletics/Academics (ATHLET)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of General Studies (DGS)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ED)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering (ENGR)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine and Applied Arts (FAA)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media (MED)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 shows the participants’ average work experience at UIUC and their current positions as academic advisors.
Table 17

*Advisor Survey Work Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at UIUC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at their current position</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Duration in months. Base date: December 1, 2013.*

The average length of employment as academic advisors of the 25 survey participants was 69 months, which is approximately 5.8 years. There was a relatively wide discrepancy among individual participants in terms of work experience, as one advisor had just started working at UIUC in Fall 2013 whereas another advisor had been in the position for about 16.5 years.

The total number of advisees also showed great variance among advisors. The average number of advisees was 557.8, but the minimum was 30 and maximum was 2500. This could be because of walk-ins and the varying size of each college or division. Furthermore, two advisors from the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics/Academics said that they rarely advise international students – stating that the percentage of advisees that are international students range from 0 to 0.02%.

This is much less than the overall mean which is approximately 20%.

The advisor survey had three sections:

1. Familiarity with and satisfaction of the EPT and ESL procedure
2. Awareness and satisfaction of the EPT score reporting procedure
These three areas were selected because the changes to the EPT score reporting procedure and policies regarding international students’ English proficiency requirement were implemented because of the international student surge. Furthermore, during my work as the research assistant for the EPT, questions related to the three areas were the most frequently asked inquiries from academic advisors.

**Familiarity with and satisfaction of the EPT and the ESL procedure.** When asked about their familiarity with the UIUC English Placement Test requirements and the ESL writing course registration procedure for international students, 84% (n = 21) answered that they were extremely or somewhat familiar with the requirement and procedure. Only four advisors stated that they were not very familiar with the requirements. Regarding whether they were aware of the Online EPT in Fall 2012 at the time of the launch, 80% (n = 20) answered that they were of the availability of the Online EPT and 20% (n = 5) said that they were unaware of the EPT at the time of the launch. Eighty-four percent (n = 21) of the advisor survey participants said that the Online EPT was helpful. The overall consensus was positive in that students were able to take the test in advance so the advisors would know their placement prior to registration. Many were satisfied that students could take the EPT in a timely manner and get placed in an appropriate ESL course, which was a considerable problem before the implementation of the Online EPT. However, some advisors did comment that many students had not completed the EPT by the time they met with advisors for summer registration, saying, “Many students have not completed the EPT by the time they meet with us for Summer Registration. It makes it very hard to plan courses, especially labs, when we don’t know the impact the placement will have on the student.” Similarly, another advisor stated, “Having the EPT online reduced some of the frustration of not being able to sit for the test on registration day, but the process is still quite confusing.” These
comments indicate that the Online EPT has resolved major issues of not having students’ results before their summer registration but still, there are problems of students not taking the test before meeting with their advisors.

**Awareness and satisfaction of the EPT score reporting procedure.** The EPT results for undergraduate test-takers are uploaded into Banner to be displayed on Placement and Proficiency (PNP) which is a program that academic advisors use to check their advisees’ placement and proficiency test results. It takes two business days for the EPT scores to upload on Banner. In order to get the test-takers’ scores to their advisors in a timely manner, the EPT RA emails the scores to the representative advisors of seven colleges (Division of General Studies, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Applied Health Studies, Business, and Fine and Applied Arts) after each test session. This is referred to as the electronic group-based score reports. This report was a new way of sending EPT scores to undergraduate academic advisors because of the surge. In order to find out whether the advisors were aware of these reports and their comments on their effectiveness, the second part of the advisor survey asked about the EPT score reporting procedure. Only 28% (n = 7) of advisors were aware of these reports and 52% (n = 13) were unaware of these reports. Of the five participants who identified themselves as advisors from colleges that do not receive these reports, one advisor was incorrect as this advisor was from the College of Fine and Applied Arts (FAA). Out of the seven advisors that said that they were aware of the group reports, six said that they had used the reports. When asked about the frequency of use, only one said that he/she had used the report many times. Two respondents said that they “sometimes” used the reports and the rest (n = 3) said they have used the report “a few times.” All six advisors that have the reports said that they were “somewhat satisfied” with
the reports, commenting that it is easier to pull the records from the online system compared to the reports. One advisor from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who did not know about the reports said that it would have been nice to have access to them, which shows that even advisors in colleges with large numbers of international undergraduate students that received the reports were unaware of them. This could be evidence of miscommunication and lack of communication channels between EPT and the advisors and that advisors in the same college may have different information. The electronic group-based reports may be helpful in identifying which ESL course(s) the student needs to take, but unless the test was completed two business days before the registration, the student cannot register for the course.

The advisors were also asked about the acceptability of the two-day delay for the EPT score results to upload to Banner and PNP. The response was generally positive as 68% of respondents said that the two-day delay is “extremely” (8%, n = 2) or “somewhat” (60%, n = 15) acceptable, saying, “students are instructed to take the placement exam more than two days before their advising appointment. If they do not, they cannot have their advising appointment. There’s no delay, as long as the students do the EPT at least 2 days before their advising appointment.” In addition, advisors understood the delay however, because many students wait until the last minute to take the test, one advisor mentioned that it would be nice if it was an overnight upload like the ALEKS\(^4\) math exam. Thirty-two percent said that the two-day delay was “not very acceptable” (28%, n = 7) or “not at all acceptable” (4%, n = 1). This was because course registration for students is only available for a limited time after the registration session.

\(^4\) The ALEKS (http://www.math.illinois.edu/ALEKS/) is the UIUC math placement test that all incoming undergraduate students should take. According to the ALEKS website, students’ scores are automatically uploaded to the students’ UIUC student profile so their advisors can have immediate access to the scores.
If students have not completed the EPT before they meet with us, their account is only open until the end of the day or 48 hours (on campus vs. virtual advising appointments) so if they take the test after we talk to them, the scores will not come in time and we have to wait until the Friday before classes start to change their schedule which can be detrimental to their course planning. (An anonymous survey participant, 2013)

One advisor who thought the two-day delay was unacceptable commented:

Registration lasts for one day. When we don't have a score, we have to track a student and find a way to get them back in to register for the ESL courses. In my experience, international students are somewhat resistant to taking these courses and it can be difficult to get them in for follow-up. Before the placements were enforced, many students left their registration appointments and registered for RHET 105 leading to struggles later in the semester. (An anonymous survey participant, 2013)

These comments show that the current two-day delay in the EPT score upload can lead to difficulties in ESL writing course registration if the student had not taken the EPT at least two-business days before the student’s meeting with the advisor.

**Self-assessment of the UIUC undergraduate English proficiency requirement and advising.** This section asked advisors about their familiarity with the UIUC undergraduate English proficiency requirement. Of the 25 respondents, 28% (n = 17) said they were somewhat familiar with the UIUC English proficiency requirement (http://admissions.illinois.edu/apply/tips_freshman.html, under “English Proficiency”).

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Figure 18. Are you familiar with the UIUC English proficiency admission requirement for international undergraduate students?

Figure 18 shows the advisors’ self-assessment of their familiarity with the UIUC English proficiency requirement. Despite their positive assessment of the familiarity, their confidence in answering EPT-related questions was somewhat mixed (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. When advising students regarding their EPT requirements, how confident are you in answering their questions?
The advisors were split in half about their confidence in answering EPT-related questions. This could be because new advisors as well as continuing advisors needed to be updated on the changes since the surge and getting all the advisors on the same level has been a challenge. Thus, the next question asked where the advisors turned to get information on the EPT. The two most used sources were other advisors and various websites. Figure 20 shows other sources advisors used to gather information about the EPT.

![Diagram showing sources of information about the EPT](image)

*Figure 20. Where do you get information regarding the EPT requirements? Check all that apply.*

The two main resources for advisors were other advisors and webpage information. Previously, it was found that even in the same college, individual advisors had varying information about the EPT. In addition, some advisors said that they were not familiar with the UIUC English proficiency information. These results show the importance of accurately updating the EPT and English proficiency requirements to advisors. Moreover, websites that provide information on
the EPT and other related requirements should be easily accessible and regularly checked for accuracy as they are one of the main resources that advisors consult for information.

Many incoming international undergraduate students are required to take the EPT, but some are exempted from the requirement based on their ACT and/or TOEFL scores. However, based on my experiences as the EPT RA in corresponding with academic advisors and international students, some international students choose to take the EPT and ESL courses to fulfill their Composition 1 requirement based on their self-assessment of their English proficiency or recommendations from their academic advisors. Therefore, I wanted to find out what factors influenced advisors to recommend the EPT to their advisees. Figure 21 shows the whether academic advisors have recommended the EPT to a student who was not required.

Figure 21. Based on your interaction with an international student, have you recommended the student to take the EPT even though the student was not required to take the test?

These recommendations were based mostly on academic advisors’ impressions of students’ English skills (see Figure 22).
Figure 22. What kind of evidence influenced you to recommend the EPT?

The most commonly used factors that influenced advisors’ recommendations were more subjective measures, such as fluency (“ability to express oneself readily and effortlessly”), pronunciation, and advisors’ perceptions of students’ comprehension ability. More objective indicators such as TOEFL, ACT/SAT, GPA, and previous schooling experience in English-speaking schools were not commonly used to recommend students to take the EPT. Even though many academic advisors have extensive experience advising international students, one should be careful about making judgments about one’s English ability based on impressionistic assessments based on short speech samples or email exchanges. It may be beneficial for academic advisors to be guided on the factors that can suggest whether a student should be recommended to go to ESL by ESL professionals.
In order to meet the growing campus need to better assist international undergraduate students, the University made a decision to enforce the EPT/ESL requirement to all undergraduate students that were required to take the EPT based on their admission information to fulfill their Freshman Composition 1 requirement. This enforcement was made during the 2011-2012 school year. Most advisors were satisfied with the enforcement. Table 18 shows the academic advisors’ satisfaction rate regarding the enforcement.

Table 18

*Satisfaction of the decision to enforce the EPT writing placement result*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was not aware of this policy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that advisors are mostly satisfied with the decision to enforce the EPT writing placement results to those that were required to take the EPT. The main reason behind the satisfaction was that the enforcement minimized the confusion in selecting the optimal route to complete the Freshman Composition 1 requirement. Regarding the enforcement, one advisor said, “Before the placements were enforced, many students left their registration appointments and registered for RHET 105 leading to struggles later in the semester.” In other words, if students take the Online EPT at least two business days before meeting with their advisors for summer online advising, getting them registered for ESL writing courses would be a very simple
process because of this enforcement in the requirement. Of the four advisors that were unaware of the policy, two advisors were from the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics/Academics which rarely admits international undergraduate students. The remaining two advisors that did not know about the enforcement were from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Engineering. Again, the results of this questions show the difference in individual information among advisors, even in colleges with concentrated populations of international students. This suggests that the EPT and ESL should play a more active role in communicating the updated information to advisors through listserv emails, information sessions during advisor meetings. It was also found that some advisors fee that the information on the EPT and ESL websites tend to be wordy.

Based on their comments from the survey, there was a consensus among advisors that cultural differences and lack understanding of the U.S. educational system are the underlying factors that make advising international undergraduate students challenging. Moreover, for international transfer students, it is more difficult to identify classes as in many instances, their previous courses are not articulated at the time of registration. Therefore, many advisors welcomed more information who takes the EPT, why they take it, and when they can take it because they themselves are not clear on what information the University provides to international students. It was reassuring to hear that the EPT and ESL writing course procedure have improved over the past five years to make the entire process transparent, as one advisor said, “The process seems to be getting better, but there is still some unfamiliar territory with EPT.”
Discussion of Findings from the Interviews and Surveys

The main consensus from the interviews from programs that provide writing instruction (ESL, RHET, and CMN) was that they had not been informed of the surge in the number of students taking the test, so they could adequately prepare for this influx. When the surge occurred in their programs they had to make quick decisions to instruct these students, yet all agree that there was no prior information or additional support from the University regarding the growth in international students. The RHET and CMN programs had to provide training and assistance to their TAs and instructors on instructing ESL students because their respective programs had not had many international students in their courses, and therefore it was difficult for them to figure out if they had accurately placed international students. Appropriate communication of changes around campus that could have influenced instruction and the academic success of students was lacking, and this could have been the reason that sudden changes had to be made in the programs. CMN had to take a rather drastic stance, by temporarily not accepting international students into their programs due to the lack of information and subsequent lack of preparation. If the campus is to continue to accept international students at this rate, an in-depth investigation of their academic experience and a needs analysis should be conducted to better accommodate these students.

The launch of the Online EPT along with the decision to enforce the EPT requirement has brought some enrollment stability to programs for ESL, RHET, and CMN. However, for the CMN program, because of its low number of internationals students, this effect could have not been as apparent when compared to the RHET program. As mentioned from the interview with Mark (student academic affairs), most international students tend to be concentrated in STEM fields. CMN mostly receives students from social science areas so the influence of the policies
and the Online EPT may not be as obvious. This can also be supported by the fact that for CMN, the surge of international students came much later than with other programs. With regard to the Writers Workshop (WW), because the program does not deal directly with students’ academic records, it not affected by the policy changes. In addition, because the purpose of the WW is to provide individualized writing assistance to students, the program has not had to make substantial changes due to the surge. Rather, the WW chose to work with other units on campus to help them better manage language and culture differences among international students.

The Online EPT and policy shifts have also helped academic advisors encourage students to take ESL courses, and the test interventions and shifts have helped advisors better guide international students with respect to students’ Composition 1 requirements. Of course, the number of students that took the Online EPT was lower than all parties had anticipated. Still, the Online EPT helped programs and advisors manage the increase. The major changes to the EPT and related policy changes seem to have helped these programs better plan their academic year, but there is still the issue of accurately and promptly communicating with international students about their Composition 1 requirements.

The survey results show that students and advisors are generally positive toward the operations carried out by the EPT staff. Some of the suggestions for improvement from students were related to solving technical issues while taking the Online EPT. This was also a finding from Chapter V of the mandate map. Technical issues could be one of the reasons that prevent students from completing the Online EPT, as, if problems arise while taking the test, the only current solution is to allow students to re-take the test during the next available test window. Some students, instead of re-taking the Online EPT, choose to take the on-campus test to avoid any possible technical problems.
Based on survey results, communication was not a big issue for students. They were generally satisfied with the communication about the EPT requirement, except for information on why they were required to take the test. Students received information about the EPT requirement mostly from the letter of admission and emails from the EPT office, which are both credible sources. Also, if students had questions about their Composition 1 requirement, most of them contacted their academic advisors or looked up information on websites. However, it is important to note that peer advising is still a major source of information for students. Peer advising was a concern that was also mentioned in the interview with the program directors, as many international students have a tendency to congregate and share information within their groups. Even though students were satisfied with the communication about the EPT requirement, it was found that many students who could have taken the Online EPT were unaware of the option to take that test.

The advisor survey also showed that advisors were generally satisfied with the test interventions and policy changes during the period from 2008-2013. Most advisors expressed that they were familiar with the requirement for international students and were aware of the changes in score reporting procedures. However, it was found that advisors in same colleges had different information about the EPT, a situation that could negatively affect their advising sessions. One of the areas that showed a discrepancy in information was awareness of the EPT Score reporting procedure—specifically, the electronic group-based score reports. Some advisors that work in colleges that receive these reports were unaware of the distribution of them by the EPT RA. Furthermore, those who knew about the reports said that they did not frequently use the reports because they were inconvenient to use; consequently, they pulled scores from the online system. Also, because of the two-day delay in getting the scores in Banner and PNP, knowing
student scores may not result in getting students promptly registered for ESL writing courses. If students do not complete the EPT at least two business days before meeting with their advisor, they cannot register for ESL, as the course registration window is open only for 48 hours from such meetings. This delays their registration in ESL courses, and if they do not register for ESL during the summer advising period, students must wait until August to register. It was found that the two-day delay might be slowing down the ESL registration process.

The advisor survey results show that advisors are satisfied with the decision to enforce the EPT writing placement test. This helped to make Composition 1 course selection much simpler for international students. This is also expected to better serve the English instruction needs of international students for success in their other classes. However, advisors still expressed concern about international students’ general English proficiency and difficulty in acculturation. The general English proficiency of international students is an area that also came up during some of the interviews, mainly with Mark (Advising) and Emily (WW), in that English proficiency is a major factor in academic success and acculturation for these students. This is an issue that could be outside the scope of this study, but it is an important matter that could be at the center of the challenges of writing instruction and advising for international students.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

The evolution of the EPT within the 3rd era of the test was motivated by a major external change – the increase in the number of test-takers. As the role of the EPT on the academic success of undergraduate students at UIUC became larger, accurate and prompt communication and information exchange also became a major duty of the EPT RA. The development of the Online EPT is considered to be an upgrade retrofit of the current operational version of the On-campus EPT, which is the Semi-enhanced EPT. During the period that I was the research assistant for the EPT, each school year brought along major changes and development to the test or its related policy. Figure 23 outlines the major changes from the 2008-2009 to the 2012-2013 school years.
Figure 23. Major changes from the 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 school year
Summary of Major Findings

External mandates as the primary force behind assessment interventions. The main influences behind the development of the Online EPT were external mandates surrounding the test score users. The international undergraduate student surge served to increase diversity on campus as well as increase revenue because international undergraduate students paid higher tuition compared to in-state students. The decision to bring in more international students subsequently affected the number of students who needed English language support. This surge in the number of students who needed language support led to an increase in the number of students who would take the English Placement Test because the EPT is a prerequisite for taking ESL writing courses, which in turn brought along a new group of score users—namely, the undergraduate academic advisors. Due to the substantial impact of undergraduate academic advisors on the academic success of undergraduate students, the EPT was influenced by the voices from the advisors. The main demand from the academic advisors was for a way to receive the EPT scores from their international advisees prior to meeting with them for online summer registration. In order to meet this request, the Online EPT was developed. According to the advisor survey results, the Online EPT seems to have assisted the advisors during the summer registration sessions because many of them were able to view their advisees’ EPT scores during the summer months.

Communication challenges regarding the EPT requirements. As evidenced from the mandate map narrated in Chapter V, information transfer regarding the increase in the number of undergraduate students required to take the EPT in Fall of 2008 to the EPT/ESL program was very much delayed. This lateness in information sharing meant that the EPT and ESL programs did not have enough time or resources to adequately prepare for the semester. This could affect
the quality of instruction and readiness for these students. There should be an understanding that all parties involved in providing quality education to students must have shared information and knowledge about their students. If there is a lack of communication or a shortage in the sharing of information, it would be difficult to anticipate necessary changes to meet the needs of these students. Issues with regard to accurately and promptly communicating with various campus units that serve international students in terms of Composition 1 instruction or registration into these Composition 1 courses was a major source of difficulty in placement or instruction of international students at UIUC. Results from the interviews show that Composition 1 units were unaware of how to instruct these international students or underprepared for doing so. Moreover, international students who took the EPT did not understand why they had to take the test, or in some cases, they did not know if they had to take the test at all. Responses from the student survey indicate that some students relied on peer-advising to make course registration decisions. Academic advisors in same colleges had different information regarding international student policies. Most of these issues could be solved to some extent from better communication with policy makers and policy users. This is crucial in maintaining quality and assurance in assessment as well as education.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Lack of a follow-up study. The purpose of this study was to examine the quality of improvement in the English Placement Test. The major goal of this dissertation is to produce findings that can be used to improve the service provided to EPT’s stakeholders and other related units. Two surveys were circulated to the two main score users of the English Placement Test: test-takers and advisors. To better understand their responses, this study could have benefitted from conducting follow-up interviews or focus group discussions to supplement the findings
from these surveys. These two main stakeholder groups of the EPT could have additional comments or suggestions for improving the test, which could be a way to discover new information about the quality of the EPT process. I did conduct interviews with program directors to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the various changes that the programs had to undergo due to the aforementioned surge. The results of the interviews provide some insight into the satisfaction of the Online EPT and related policies; however, a follow-up study based on the surveys could have supplemented the survey results and provide more implications for improving the test.

**Student survey sample.** The student survey was distributed to EPT test-takers and other international students that may or may not have taken the test. However, the primary sample for the student survey was the group of EPT test-takers. Because the student survey was circulated primarily to EPT test-takers, they could have been more tuned in to ESL and EPT in general. In order to obtain a more thorough understanding of the communication regarding English language requirements among international undergraduate students, I believe that the results of the survey could have better represented the international undergraduate population if the survey had been distributed to all international undergraduate students on campus. The procedure of receiving this approval from the University was complicated and time-consuming, so I was not able to do that in this study. However, in follow-up studies that investigate students’ level of satisfaction with EPT-related policies, this study could provide guidance for future researchers.

**Advisor survey sample.** The advisor survey was sent out through the UIUC academic advisor listserv. Therefore, it was difficult to find out the number of advisors that received this survey. I believe that I would have been better informed about the number of advisors if I had contacted each college individually to request for their help in distributing the survey, but this
would have been a time-consuming process. I did my best to contact this group through personal
contacts and by using the listserv, but it was difficult to measure the exact response rate of this
survey.

**Effects of the Online EPT.** This study investigates the process of the development of the
Online EPT and its external mandates that influenced the process. Findings from the study
suggest that the Online EPT and related policy changes have positively influenced the test’s
primary stakeholders. For future research, I would suggest a validation study of the Online EPT -
more specifically, its comparability with the On-campus EPT. Equivalency and comparability
studies on paper-based tests and computer-based tests is a growing field in language testing due
to rapid developments in computer-assisted language learning and teaching.

However, little research has been conducted in comparing the two test delivery formats in
placement tests used in institutional settings. Fulcher (1999) investigated the reliability of the
computerized version of a placement test that was converted from a paper-based counterpart.
Based on his findings, he advised institutions that were considering converting their placement
tests from the conventional to a computerized format, as follows:

The question that remains for this institution is whether to implement the CBT (alongside
the exiting writing tests) on the basis of this evidence, or to conduct further research that
would provide further evidence in support of one of the two hypotheses regarding score
meaning outlined above. (p. 289)

This study is important in that it was one of the first papers to study an operational university
placement that was undergoing procedures to be converted into a computerized format. Previous
studies on comparing paper-and-pencil tests with computerized tests suggest there could be
differences in student behavior in terms of handwriting, planning, and organization of ideas.
Findings also indicate that raters could also be affected by these differences. A more recent study by Lee (2004) investigated the issue of equivalency of ESL writers’ performance on paper-based and computerized versions of the UIUC EPT. However, in Lee’s computerized version of the EPT, only the final writing activity was carried out via computer, and other activities in the EPT remained the same as on the On-campus test.

The two versions of the current EPT were developed using a detailed common test specification. However, because of factors in student and rater behaviors that may have been difficult to control, I believe that a full content alignment study on the comparison of the Online EPT and the On-campus EPT should be conducted to ensure that there is a strong alignment between the two versions and that the two test versions are assessing the same test constructs.

**Continued efforts to manage the quality of assessment.** This work is one of the first quality management dissertations on the English Placement Test. The English Placement Test research assistant routinely evaluates the test to ensure its consistency and accuracy, but this was one of the first studies that examined external factors that affected the test. Routine investigations on factors that influence the test, as well as related policies, could help improve the quality of the test, in addition to transfer of information and communication to stakeholders. The scope of this recommended investigation need not be carried out on the same scale as my dissertation, but awareness of the need and actual performance of this evaluation could enrich the test. The results of this routine investigation could go into the test specifications to ensure that the results are documented and passed on to future research assistants and researchers.

**My Personal Reflection**

When I was first approached about the position of the EPT research assistant, I was concerned that I was not prepared academically to successfully fulfill the duties, but I was
gratified that I had been recommended to take on this position. Once I began the duties for the position, the job required me to consider aspects of the test that were not explained to me at the time I was approached about accepting the job. It required me to think about not only the administration of the test, but also communication about and improvement of the test. The surge in the number of students taking the test transpired when I was first settling into the position, so I had to be prepared for different elements that might emerge. I believe the changes that the test went through, in turn, made me make quick decisions and become a better communicator. This entire experience as the EPT RA was an extremely valuable experience.

My experience from 2008 until 2013 was the foundation of this dissertation. My close involvement in the test could be a factor that might be used against me if one was to consider the objectivity of the research findings and discussion. However, I believe this dissertation was possible because of my in-depth knowledge of the current state of the EPT. I was one of the few people, or in some cases, the only person involved in many decision-making situations, and because I knew the impact any decision could have on the academic lives of EPT test-takers, I had to evaluate many possible scenarios from a practical perspective. Decisions did not only affect my work but also the academic success of many other students at UIUC. I had to be very careful about what I said to other units on campus because of this responsibility. The practicality and applicability of the test format and decisions were the main considerations of the EPT RA position, which doubled as the major challenges of the position. These challenges led me to deliberate various factors that could influence my decisions regarding test administration and the consequences that changes on the test might have on test score users. As a result, it helped me better understand the importance of maintaining quality in a product, as well as providing evidence to support the use and further development of the product in terms of its use in society.
and the consequences of its use. My experience as the EPT RA has helped me to better understand the abstract concept of test validity that Messick (1989) explained – that is, evidence concerned with the intended and unintended consequences of score use. Even though I did not then understand the concept of validity as I do now, I believe that I got a sneak peek of it during my work on the English Placement Test.

As was found from my work on this dissertation, communication was something that I struggled with. It was not a language barrier that I had difficulty overcoming, but rather finding the optimal, most effective, and most efficient communication methods to accurately provide information about the test. I worked hard on the EPT website so it could be used as the main source of information for test-takers and test score users. The main addition to the website was the EPT validation report. The main purpose of the report was to provide research findings of the EPT from previous studies and other ongoing EPT-related projects to researchers and score users. I hope that this document can be updated periodically to supplement the administrative information that is already available on the EPT website. Communication to test-takers regarding administration of the test - in particular, the Online EPT - was a major obstacle in the launch of the Online EPT. Challenges arose due to simple issues, such as students not receiving or reading the emails that were sent out about the Online EPT. It was also discovered during the course of the research that policies regarding transfer students were different from freshmen because some transfer students received partial or full credit for the Composition 1 requirement, based on their prior education experience. This part was not discussed in the dissertation as this was beyond the scope of this research, but differences in EPT requirements for transfer students and freshmen should be considered for future researchers who want to study the EPT. Information-sharing with academic advisors was also difficult because it was challenging to reach them. I did attend some
advisor registration review sessions, but even with this effort, results showed that there was still a lack of an accurate communication channel between the EPT staff and the advising community. The results of the advisor survey show that although communication between the two groups has improved significantly, there is still room for improvement. Also, another communication problem was revealed from the interviews – namely, that with higher campus-level committees. ESL representatives were not being invited to campus-level meetings that involved discussions regarding international students. The problem of communication was not only between the score users and the test administrator, but also between ESL and EPT and campus-level units.

It may be difficult to generalize to other universities the findings from this research; however, this UIUC ESL placement testing solution can be an example that other universities may consider. Issues related to communication among and within units, as well as transfer of information are areas that I believe should be deliberated to provide quality education to students. The decision to increase the number of undergraduate international students can be compared to the “butterfly effect”, as this change led to modifications in placement testing, the course registration process, course fulfillment requirements, and advising information.

While writing this dissertation, it was a great challenge for me to stay within the boundaries of my research scope. Because of the close relationship between placement testing and course objectives, much data that I gathered were also related to ESL courses or policy changes that were interesting, but had little relevance to the Online EPT. If I had not paid close attention, and constantly reminded myself of the scope and limits of my research, parts of this dissertation could have turned into critical analyses of the ESL curriculum or undergraduate international student policies. I was careful not to make pedagogical implications based on the findings of the research because the focus was not on the curriculum, but rather on the Online
EPT. When investigating studies that are related to language placement testing, it is an easy transition to cover curriculum and course objectives, but I believe language testers should consider that their assessment findings can be used as valuable evidence for other researchers to use in order to provide implications that may give better insight into other areas of education or related fields.

When I talked to other PhD students in the field of language testing, many tests that they were developing were being created mainly for research purposes, which meant that practicality and immediate application of the test were not the primary forces that were driving the test development. However, I was challenged with the task of obtaining a usable product that could be launched as operational. This mandate placed a great deal of pressure on me as a student and a test developer, but now that I reflect on my experience, this has helped be become a more professional and responsible language tester.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: BENCHMARK FOR THE EPT WRITTEN EXAM

*Updated by Katie Honken, Haram (Hannah) Kim, Sun Joo Chung (Summer 2013)*

*Exempt (graduate; 502) essays will exceed the standards for 501.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>111 / 500</th>
<th>115 / 501</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpreting the Writing Prompt</strong></td>
<td>• Does not directly address the essay prompt</td>
<td>• Clearly addresses the essay prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Off topic</td>
<td>• Does not contain irrelevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contains irrelevant information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Causes confusion for the reader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>• Missing one or more of the five parts (introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion)</td>
<td>• All five parts are present (introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and conclusion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conclusion introduces new ideas and/or does not provide closure</td>
<td>• Conclusion provides closure and does not introduce new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organization of ideas is difficult to follow</td>
<td>• Organization of ideas flows well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraph Structure and Development (PIE)</strong></td>
<td>• Missing one or more parts of PIE</td>
<td>• Nearly all parts of PIE are evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inappropriate and insufficient explanations and illustrations (fewer than 2) in body paragraphs</td>
<td>• Appropriate and adequate explanations and illustrations (at least 2 per body paragraph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction and Thesis Statement</strong></td>
<td>• Introduction is absent or contains irrelevant information</td>
<td>• Introduction clearly introduces topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unclear what the essay is going to be about</td>
<td>• Thesis statement clearly states main idea of essay and contains most or all of the necessary parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thesis statement may be absent, unclear, or missing parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>111 / 500</th>
<th>115 / 501</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion/Coherence</td>
<td>· Difficult to follow</td>
<td>· Easy to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Lacks transitions</td>
<td>· Transitions used throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Does not connect ideas from one sentence to the next</td>
<td>· Ideas are connected from one sentence to the next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Illogical in places</td>
<td>· Mostly logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Use</td>
<td>· Absent or unsuccessful</td>
<td>· Attempts to synthesize sources are often successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Uses only one source to support ideas</td>
<td>· Uses more than one source to support ideas (uses both EPT article and EPT lecture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Contains few or no ideas from the sources</td>
<td>· Successfully uses sources to support ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism, Paraphrasing,</td>
<td>· Plagiarism may be very obvious and pervasive</td>
<td>· Plagiarism may be covert, or may contain only one or two minor instances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quoting</td>
<td>· Credit is not given to the original sources for ideas used</td>
<td>· Credit is given to original sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Paraphrasing may be absent or attempts may be unsuccessful</td>
<td>· Paraphrasing is present and successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Quoting may be absent or may lack quotation marks</td>
<td>· Use of quoting is successful, and quotation marks are almost always used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Style and Grammar</td>
<td>· Writing is informal</td>
<td>· Appropriate for an academic audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Grammatical errors impede understanding</td>
<td>· Contains few instances of informality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· Grammatical errors do not impede understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: RATING SCALE FOR THE EPT ORAL INTERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Levels</th>
<th>OI Phase I</th>
<th>OI Phase II</th>
<th>Error Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46(+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oral Placement message for test-takers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Level</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>110hc</td>
<td>510q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>110hc</td>
<td>510q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>110c</td>
<td>510c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
<td>Exempt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Letter(s) after course number denotes placement information, i.e. "hc" means "highly recommended", "q" means "required", and "c" means "recommended".
APPENDIX C: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW SOLICITATION EMAIL

My name is Sun Joo Chung. I am a PhD student in the Department of Educational Psychology. I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation to look at how the recent surge of international undergraduate student at UIUC has affected your program.

I am interested in conducting an interview with you to look in to how your program assists international undergraduate students. I am interested in what your program is doing to meet the needs of this growing population. In particular, I would like to ask for mostly descriptive information about your program including:

- Goals of your program and the kinds of services you provide
- Changes or additions, if any, your program had to make for international undergraduate students
- Difficulties or challenges your program due to the surge
- Staff training.

I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview which will take about 30 minutes to an hour. The individual interview will be audio recorded. I will transcribe the recording of the interview. The recording and transcription will be saved in a password-protected server until the project is complete. In the final draft of the report, I will not disclose your name but rather refer to you by your job title. If you are uncomfortable with me using your job title to match your interview content, you can choose for your job title not to be disclosed in the report and any content in the interview that could be used to identify you will not be included in the report.

Attached is a copy of the consent form.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in the interview. Your participation will be very much appreciated and your help will help us improve our services for international undergraduate students in terms of assessment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Thank you.

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project concerning the English Placement Test (EPT) and its efforts to accommodate the growing international undergraduate students at UIUC. The purpose of the study is to investigate the program effectiveness and application of the recent surge of international undergraduate students. This interview is to obtain information on how
your program accommodated to meet the needs of the surge. This study is conducted by Sun Joo Chung and Professor Fred Davidson at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time. Your responses will be audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. You are being asked to take part in this interview because you work in a program that assists international undergraduate students in writing and/or course registration. The interview will take place in a private room of your choosing and, during the interview, you will be asked questions about:

- Goals of your program and the kinds of services you provide
- Changes or additions, if any, your program had to make for international undergraduate students
- Difficulties or challenges to your program due to the surge
- Staff training.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. If you decide to stop participating in the interview, we encourage you to talk to the researcher. If you decide not to participate or to leave the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researcher(s) or any other negative consequences.

No known physical risks are expected as a result of the study, although there may be some minimal risks concerning the content of the interview. There are no risks to individuals participating in this interview beyond those that exist in daily life.

If you agree to take part in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. However, information gathered in this study may help us understand the various efforts taken around campus to meet the needs of the growing international undergraduate population and improve our services for international undergraduate students in terms of assessment.

Every effort will be made to keep any information collected from you confidential. In order to keep information from you safe, the study data will be kept in a password-protected server to which only the researcher can access. Your name will not be included in the dissemination of the results but we would like to include your job title in the results of this research project. We want to identify your job title for attribution and explanatory purposes. However, you have the option to not have your job title used when data from this study are published; if this is the case, please indicate so at the bottom of this form. Possible outlets of dissemination may be conference papers, journal articles and a doctorate dissertation.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Sun Joo Chung (schung26@illinois.edu) or Dr. Fred Davidson (fgd@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in the study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-3670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.
Consent of Participation

I understand all of the information in this Informed Consent Form. I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I will be audio-recorded as a part of this study. Please indicate whether you agree to be audio-recorded as a part of this study.

☐ YES
☐ NO

Please indicate whether you agree to have your job title used alongside your comments in the final publication that results from this research.

☐ YES
☐ NO

___________________________________                      ______________________________
Participant Signature                                                           Date

___________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
APPENDIX D: PROGRAM DIRECTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When did you start working at UIUC?
2. When did you start your current position?
3. What is your current position and briefly describe your main duties.
4. What is the goal of your program? What is the primary focus of your program?
5. Approximately how many students do you serve each school year?
6. (Applies to non-ESL/EPT programs) Of the total number of students you serve each school year, approximately what percentage of students are non-native speakers of English? Has this percentage changed over the past 5-6 years?
7. What kind of challenges or difficulties do you have when serving international students? How do you overcome those difficulties or challenges?
8. What kind of needs do international students have that are different from domestic students?
9. The surge of international undergraduate students is now about 5 years old and seems to have stabilized. Over this 5 year period, have you made any changes or created new programs to accommodate these international undergraduate students?
10. How do you train your staff? Have you had to implement new training to prepare your staff to serve this new demographic of students? If so, can you elaborate?
11. What kind of support, if any, did you receive from the University regarding the implementation of new programs to meet the needs of international undergraduate students?
12. When international undergraduate students finish your program/receive assistance from your program, how proficient are they compared to when they began your program/service?
13. Who do you think were most affected by the changes in your program and who do you think are the relevant stakeholders of the EPT?
14. Is there anything you want to know about accommodating the needs of international undergraduate students?
15. What kind of future plans do you have to accommodate the international undergraduate students?
16. Do you have any final comments?
APPENDIX E: STUDENT SURVEY

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project concerning the English Placement Test (EPT) and its efforts to accommodate the growing international undergraduate students at UIUC. The purpose of the study is to gather information regarding the effectiveness of the efforts to improve the English Placement Tests and other related policies that can affect international undergraduate students. This study is conducted by Sun Joo Chung and Professor Fred Davidson at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

This survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You will be asked to complete an online survey about your experiences using the English Placement Test.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to complete this survey, just close your web browser. The decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your grades at, status at, or future relations with the University of Illinois. We will never be able to link your responses (to these survey questions) to any other database here on campus.

Your participation in this survey will help us improve our services for international undergraduate students in terms of assessment. No known physical risks are expected as a result of the study, although there may be some minimal risks concerning the content of the survey. There are no risks to individuals participating in this survey beyond those that exist in daily life.

Your participation in this research will be completely confidential. Possible outlets of dissemination may be conference papers, journal articles and a doctorate dissertation.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Sun Joo Chung (schung26@illinois.edu) or Dr.Fred Davidson (fgd@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in the study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-3670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

If you agree to participate in this survey, please click below to continue. Choosing to continue indicates that you (a) have read and understood the statements of this consent screen and (b) are eighteen years of age or older.
1. When was your first semester at UIUC? (example: Fall 2010, Spring 2009)

2. Were you admitted to UIUC as a degree-seeking freshman, degree-seeking transfer student, or an exchange student?
   Degree-seeking freshman
   Degree-seeking transfer
   Exchange student
   Other (please specify) _______________

3. What college were you admitted to?
   Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences
   Applied Health Sciences
   Aviation
   Business
   Division of General Studies
   Education
   Engineering
   Fine and Applied Arts
   Liberal Arts and Sciences
   Media
   Other (please specify)

4. Which of the following best describes you?
   International student, my first language is not English
   International student, my first language is English
   US resident/citizen, my first language is English
   US resident/citizen, my first language is not English

5. What is your native country?
6. What is your native language?

7. Have you attended schools that used English as the language of instruction prior to enrolling in UIUC?
   I have not attended schools that used English as the language of instruction.
   less than 1 year
   1-2 years
   2-3 years
   over 3 years

**EPT/ESL Requirement Communication**

8. To the best of your knowledge, were you required to take the English Placement Test (EPT) when you were admitted to UIUC?
   Yes (go to question #9)
   No (go to question #12)
   I don’t know. (go to question #12)

9. How did you find out you were required to take the EPT?
   From letter of admission (notice of admission letter)
   Email from the English Placement Test office
   From academic advisor
   From a friend
   Other (please specify) __________________

10. Was it easy to find out that you were required to take the EPT?
    Extremely easy
    Somewhat easy
    Somewhat difficult
    Extremely difficult
11. Was the information regarding why you were required to take the EPT clearly explained?
   Extremely clear
   Somewhat clear
   Somewhat unclear
   Extremely unclear

12. Did you contact anyone requesting information about the EPT requirement? Please select all.
   Academic advisor
   Office of admission
   EPT office
   Did not contact anyone
   Other (please specify)___________________

13. When determining how to fulfill your Freshman Composition 1 requirement, what has been your best source of advice?
   Academic advisor
   Webpage information
   EPT advisor
   ESL advisor
   Friends or other students
   I did not receive advice about this.
   Other (please specify) _________________

14. How would you rate your overall satisfaction regarding the communication with UIUC regarding your EPT requirement?
   Extremely satisfied
   Somewhat satisfied
   Somewhat unsatisfied
   Extremely unsatisfied
15. Do you have any comments/recommendations regarding the communication with UIUC regarding your EPT requirement?

**EPT Score**

16. Did you take the English Placement Test?
   Yes (go to question #17)
   No (go to question #25)

17. Did you take the Online EPT or the On-campus EPT?
   Online EPT (go to question #20)
   On-campus EPT (go to question #18)

18. Were you aware of the availability of the Online EPT? (This question applies ONLY to students that were admitted for Fall 2012/FA2013 intake. If you were NOT admitted for Fall 2012/Fall2013, please check “Not applicable” and continue to question #20.)
   Yes, I was aware of the Online EPT. (go to question #19)
   No, I was unaware of the Online EPT. (go to question #20)
   Not applicable (go to question #20)

19. Why were you unable to take the Online EPT?

20. Based on your performance on the written exam of the EPT, what was your initial writing placement?
   ESL 113
   ESL 114 (or ESL 111)
   ESL 115

21. Based on your EPT writing placement, did you take any ESL writing course?
   Yes (go to question # 21)
   No (go to question #25)
Please check all the ESL writing courses you took and provide the course grade for the course(s) that you took.

22. ESL 113; Grade ___
23. ESL 114 (or ESL 111); Grade ___
24. ESL 115; Grade ___

Did you take any non-ESL courses to fulfill your Composition I requirement? If so, please check the course(s) and provide the course grade for the course(s) that you took.

25. Rhetoric 100; Grade ___
26. Rhetoric 101; Grade ___
27. Rhetoric 102; Grade ___
28. Rhetoric 103; Grade ___
29. Rhetoric 104; Grade ___
30. Rhetoric 105; Grade ___
31. Communication 111; Grade ___
32. Communication 112; Grade ___

33. Do you have any comments about your EPT score and ESL/Comp 1 course grade?

**EPT/ESL course registration process**

Please rate your overall satisfaction with the quality of the following information
1 (Extremely satisfied) – 2 (Somewhat satisfied) – 3 (Not very satisfied) – 4 (Not at all satisfied) – Not applicable

34. The information about the EPT at the EPT website
35. The EPT registration process
36. The ease of viewing EPT results
37. The information about the ESL writing courses at the ESL writing courses website
38. The ESL writing courses registration process

Please rate your overall satisfaction with the quality of communication with the following University personnel about your EPT requirement.
1 (Extremely satisfied) – 2 (Somewhat satisfied) – 3 (Not very satisfied) – 4 (Not at all satisfied) – Not applicable
39. Office of admission
40. Academic advisor
41. ESL personnel
42. EPT personnel

43. Do you have any comments about the English Placement Test?
APPENDIX F: ACADEMIC ADVISOR SURVEY

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project concerning the English Placement Test (EPT) and its efforts to accommodate the growing international undergraduate students at UIUC. The purpose of the study is to gather information regarding the effectiveness of the efforts to improve the English Placement Tests and other related policies that can affect international undergraduate students. This study is conducted by Sun Joo Chung and Professor Fred Davidson at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

This survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You will be asked to complete an online survey about your experiences using the English Placement Test.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to complete this survey, just close your web browser. The decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your grades at, status at, or future relations with the University of Illinois. We will never be able to link your responses (to these survey questions) to any other database here on campus.

Your participation in this survey will help us improve our services for international undergraduate students in terms of assessment. No known physical risks are expected as a result of the study, although there may be some minimal risks concerning the content of the survey. There are no risks to individuals participating in this survey beyond those that exist in daily life.

Your participation in this research will be completely confidential. Possible outlets of dissemination may be conference papers, journal articles and a doctorate dissertation.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Sun Joo Chung (schung26@illinois.edu) or Dr. Fred Davidson (fgd@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in the study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-3670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

If you agree to participate in this survey, please click below to continue. Choosing to continue indicates that you (a) have read and understood the statements of this consent screen and (b) are eighteen years of age or older.
[Additional questions or revised information in the main survey are highlighted.]

1. Which college are you currently working in?
   - Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences
   - Applied Health Sciences
   - Aviation
   - Business
   - Division of General Studies
   - Education
   - Engineering
   - Fine and Applied Arts
   - Liberal Arts and Sciences
   - Media
   - Other (please specify)

2. When did you start working at UIUC? (example: January 2007)

3. When did you start your current job? (example: July 2009)

4. Approximately how many students in total do you advise in a school year (Fall – Spring - Summer)?

5. Approximately what percentage of your annual advisees are non-native English speakers?

6. How familiar are you with the UIUC English Placement Test requirements and the ESL writing course registration procedure for international undergraduate students? (Please use the information on the following websites ONLY as a reference regarding the EPT and ESL writing course. EPT information & ESL writing courses)
   - Extremely familiar
   - Somewhat familiar
   - Not very familiar
   - Not at all familiar

7. The Online EPT was launched for Fall 2012 incoming international undergraduate students. Were you aware of the Online EPT at that time?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Based on your experience, was the Online EPT helpful for you as an academic advisor?
   - Extremely helpful
   - Somewhat helpful
9. Please provide comments to your response to question 8.

10. The EPT research assistant sends electronic group-based score reports at the end of each test day to seven undergraduate colleges (Division of General Studies, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Applied Health Studies, Business, and Fine and Applied Arts) that make up most of the undergraduate EPT population. If you are an advisor in one of the seven colleges, are you aware of the electronic group-based score reports? If you are not an advisor in one of the seven colleges, please check “not applicable” and go to question # 15.
   Yes, I am aware of the reports. (go to question #11)
   No, I am unaware of the reports. (go to question #15)
   Not applicable (go to question #15)

11. If you are aware of those group-based reports, have you used them to advise students?
   Yes, I have used the reports. (go to question #12)
   No, I have never used the reports. (go to question #15)

12. If you have used the group-based reports to advise students, how often do you use them?
   never, a few times, sometimes, many times

13. If you have used the group-based reports, how satisfied are you with the effectiveness of them?
   Extremely satisfied
   Somewhat satisfied
   Not very satisfied
   Not at all satisfied

14. Please provide comments to your response to question 12 and 13 regarding your satisfaction with the effectiveness of the group-based reports.

15. The EPT score takes approximately two business days to upload to Banner and Proficiency and Placement (PNP). How acceptable is this two-day delay for you when advising students?
   Extremely acceptable
   Somewhat acceptable
   Not very acceptable
16. How does this two-day delay affect your advising? (optional)

17. Are you familiar with the UIUC English proficiency admission requirement for international undergraduate students? (Please use the information on the following website ONLY as a reference if you need further clarification about the requirement: English proficiency requirement, refer to “English Proficiency” under “Required Application Materials.”
   Extremely familiar
   Somewhat familiar
   Not very familiar
   Not at all familiar

18. When advising students regarding their EPT requirements, how confident are you in answering their questions?
   Extremely confident
   Somewhat confident
   Not very confident
   Not at all confident

19. Where do you get information regarding the EPT requirements? Check all that apply.
   Other advisors
   Supervisor
   Webpage information
   Past advising experience
   EPT information session at advisor meeting
   EPT research assistant (via email)
   Other (please specify)

20. Based on your interaction with an international student, have you recommended the student to take the EPT even though the student was not required to take the test?
   Yes. (go to question # Error! Reference source not found.)
   o. (go to question # 22)

21. What kind of evidence influenced you to make the recommendation? Check all that apply.
   Student’s ability to express oneself readily and effortlessly
   Student’s ability to pronounce English
   Student’s ability to understand your speech
   Student’s previous experience in English-speaking schools
Student’s GPA
Student’s ACT/SAT score
Students TOEFL score
Other (please specify) ______________

22. How satisfied are you with the University’s decision to enforce the EPT/ESL writing placement result to all students that were required to take the EPT based on their admission dossier to fulfill their Composition I requirement?
   Extremely satisfied
   Somewhat satisfied
   Not very satisfied
   Not at all satisfied
   I was not aware of this policy.

23. Based on your interaction with international undergraduate students, what kind of needs do international students have that are different from domestic students? (optional)

24. What kind of challenges or difficulties do you have when serving international students? How do you overcome those difficulties or challenges? (optional)

25. Is there anything you want to know about accommodating the needs of international undergraduate students? (optional)

26. Do you have any recommendations to the EPT staff on how they can improve their services? (optional)

27. Please provide any additional comments or recommendations regarding your experience advising international undergraduate students regarding their EPT requirement. (optional) ______________________ (optional)
APPENDIX G: PROCEDURES OF THE REGULAR EPT, ENHANCED EPT, AND

SEMI-ENHANCED EPT

1. Regular EPT

The Regular EPT consists of two parts: a written test and an oral interview. The written test is a 50-minute video-and-reading-based essay which requires the test-takers to incorporate into their own essay relevant information from a videotaped lecture and a reading passage. Examinees are asked to write an essay based on the information they have gathered from these two sources. The oral interview is administered individually and usually lasts about 30 minutes. At the oral interview, students are given a topic on which to speak for three minutes. If students speak intelligibly, they are exempted from further oral testing. Otherwise, students are required to take another exam in which they will read sentences from material given to them.

1) Writing Section (about 2 hours in length).
In order to demonstrate the ability in comprehending and producing academic English essays accepted in most U.S. universities, examinees need to successfully complete the task of integrating information from different sources (i.e. the academic / non-technical lecture in a videotape and the reading text of the same theme) and presenting it in a general writing format (i.e. introduction, body and conclusion).

Specific Procedures:

1. Check in at 8:30 am (10 minutes)
2. General directions. (5 minutes)
   When they get to the testing site, test-takers receive their test booklets and are given directions on how to fill out the form.
3. Watch a video of an academic lecture (7-11 minutes).
   Test-takers take down notes as they watch the lecture.
4. Proctors hand out the reading text
5. Reading the text AND writing the essay (50 minutes)
   Test-takers are asked to read the reading text provided and they start the writing task whenever they are ready. (*Time for reading the text depends on individual test-takers).

2) Oral Interview.
The oral interview is designed to determine if students are required to take, are recommended to take, or are exempt from taking an ESL pronunciation course. The interview is administered individually and requires at most about 20 minutes.
The oral interview consists of two parts. One part involves free speaking, including talking for three minutes on an everyday topic supplied by the interviewer. If students speak intelligibly enough during the free-speaking part, the interviewer may dismiss the students at the end of part one. Otherwise, the interviewer continues to the second part in
which students read phrases, sentences and dialogs from material the interviewer provides. Results of both the writing test and the oral interview are usually available on the following day as the place noted on students' information pages.

2. Enhanced EPT
The Enhanced EPT is a writing test format that combines an oral interview, as described in the regular EPT, with the workshop-based EPT essay test. A major difference between the Enhanced EPT and traditional or ‘regular’ EPT is found in the essay test component. When compared with the regular EPT, the essay component of the Enhanced EPT provides examinees with a variety of facilitative activities. The purpose of these activities is to counterbalance some of constraints imposed on the writer that are aggravated by the method of a severely-timed single-draft essay test (e.g. lack of time and context, topic familiarity, etc; Cho, 2001). By having examinees fully engage in the writing process, the test is expected to elicit a comprehensive range of writing abilities and to obtain writing performance samples that are a more accurate reflection of examinees' writing instruction needs.

The essay test is divided into two sessions, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Examinees must attend both sessions to complete the test. The essay test is arranged in the tripartite structure of writing: planning, writing and reviewing. The planning and writing phases take place in the (approximately) two and a half hour first session in the morning, while the reviewing phase occurs in the second session in the afternoon – it lasts approximately two hours.

Specific Procedures

Part One

1) Check-in (10 minutes)

2) Oral interview phase 1 (30 minutes) Test-takers are asked some general questions.

3) Explanation about the enhanced EPT procedures (5 minutes) Test-takers are given booklets explaining the tasks for the day.

4) Topic introduction, followed by group brainstorming (10 minutes) Test-takers will be assigned a topic question and asked to brainstorm answers.

5) Whole class discussion (10 minutes).

6) Break (5 minutes)

7) Video watching (10 minutes): Test-takers watch a lecture.
8) Article reading (20 minutes) Test-takers read an article relevant to the topic introduced in the video.

9) Group discussion (20 minutes) Test-takers answer questions based on the contents of both the video and the reading.

10) Break (5 minutes)

11) Explanation on the scoring criteria (10 minutes)

12) Rough draft writing (10 minutes) Test-takers organize their essay and write a first, rough draft.

13) Break (2 hours) / Intensive Oral interview. Test-takers required to take the intensive oral interview are asked to stay for an individual interview (20 minutes)

Part Two:

1) Explanation of self-evaluation process (5 minutes) Test-takers get their draft essays back and provided with a self-evaluation sheet.

2) Self-evaluation (15 minutes) Test-takers read their own essays and evaluate them by responding to the self-evaluation form.

3) Peer review (45 minutes) Test-takers get guidelines about how to review other test takers’ writings and asked to make suggestions for improvement.

4) Break (5 minutes)

5) Essay revision (50 minutes). Test-takers write their final essays.

6) End of the test. Test-takers are asked to submit both final version and the draft.

3. Semi-Enhanced EPT

1) Writing Section (about 4 hours in length). This integrated writing test requires students to produce an academic essay based on the information obtained from a reading passage and a short lecture.
### Specific Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:10 AM</td>
<td>Check In</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20 AM</td>
<td>Explanation of EPT Procedure and Topic Introduction</td>
<td>(5-10min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher explains the test process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Oral Interview Phase I</td>
<td>(40-60min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test-takers are asked some general questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(This phase is removed for very small test administrations.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 AM</td>
<td>Article Reading</td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note taking allowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50 AM</td>
<td>Mini Lecture and Group Discussion</td>
<td>(30 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20 AM</td>
<td>Explanation of Scoring Rubric</td>
<td>(5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher explains the scoring criteria to help students’ essay writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25 AM</td>
<td>First Writing Task</td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A guideline is provided. Students will outline their essays based on the guideline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 AM</td>
<td>Peer Review and Q/A with Teacher</td>
<td>(20 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion questions are provided. The teacher forms groups. Students will read each other's first drafts and make suggestions for improvement based on discussion questions given by the teacher. Students can also ask questions to the teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:05 AM</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>(5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:10 AM</td>
<td>Write the Essay</td>
<td>(60 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10 AM</td>
<td>Finish Written Exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2) Oral Interview

#### Specific Procedures (Tentative)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00 PM</td>
<td>Oral Interview Phase II</td>
<td>(30min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are interviewed individually for assessment of their pronunciation skill.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H: ONLINE EPT TEST SPECIFICATION

Online EPT Test Specification

Version 1.0 (December 31, 2013)

1. Introduction
Due to the surge in the number of international undergraduate population at UIUC in 2008, there was a voice for a more time-efficient test delivery mode. This was triggered due to problems in new student advising – newly admitted UG students are advised during the summer months prior to their physical arrival on campus. Because the current semi-enhanced version of the EPT (SEEPT) tests students the week before the start of instruction on campus, there was an inconvenience for both advisors and students to receive the EPT results and discuss their options for course registration. This led to the development of the Online EPT to provide an option to students to take the EPT before their physical arrival on campus.

2. The changes in the mandate
The operational EPT version is the Semi-Enhanced EPT, designed to test students in a half-day test. The surge brought on new mandates from the undergraduate advisors and admissions officers. In the current system, undergraduate students’ EPT results are uploaded to PNP which is a system used by advisors to view students’ placement and proficiency test results. There is a two-business-day delay in the uploading process that many advisors find inconvenient. Students who did not take the test well ahead of registration do not have their EPT scores which delays the class registration process and many times, students must meet with their advisors again after the official registration which doubles the workload for advisors and students.

The new demands of the advisors to meet the needs of the “surge” led to changes in the mandate. Now the EPT is under pressure to set up a testing system where the students can take the test during the summer prior to their enrollment at the university. Other subjects like chemistry, math, and physics require students to take an online placement exam to determine initial class placement.

The external mandate motivated a research project to investigate ways to create online assessment tools so that students can take the EPT before coming to campus in August. The EPT team considered using self-assessment as a supplementary tool for assessing students’ academic writing abilities. The results of the self-assessment was thought to assist in determining whether students have the ability to accurately assess their writing abilities and can be used as a tool for placement into the ESL courses.
During Spring and Fall 2010, the EPT team conducted a self-assessment survey to undergraduate test-takers of the EPT in order to find out if there could be differences in the results of the survey between different placement levels. The results, however, showed that there were no statistically significant differences between written levels 3 (ESL 114 or ESL 111) and 4 (ESL 115) (Chung and Kim, 2010).

3. Objectives of the Online EPT Writing Exam

3.1. General Description
In the online integrated writing test, students will write an argumentative essay based on a given topic, using information obtained from two sources: 1) an article and 2) a mini lecture. In the essay, students are expected to demonstrate their abilities to write an academic essay on a level that is accepted in most U.S. universities.

3.2. Specific Objective
In accordance with the previous versions of the EPT, the online EPT looks at how well students demonstrate the ability in comprehending and producing academic English essays accepted in most U.S. universities. Students need to successfully complete the task of integrating information from different sources (i.e. an academic/non-technical 4-6 minute video lecture and a reading text of the same theme) and presenting it in a general writing format (i.e. introduction, body and conclusion).

The specific abilities/skills being tested are:
a. composing an argumentative essay on a given topic
b. presenting clear organization and development at both paragraph and essay level
c. obtaining information on a given theme from different source channels, for instance, listening to lectures and reading pertinent texts
d. understanding main ideas and being able to distinguish them from minor ones
e. integrating and synthesizing the information given and presenting it in a general writing format -- namely, introduction, body and conclusion
f. using outside sources (lecture and reading) as supporting evidence to develop one’s argument writing in one's own words, paraphrasing, summarizing, and/or quoting the information given.
g. citing sources in one’s essay.

4. Prompt Attributes of the Online Writing Exam.
4.1. Specific Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Grouping</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Delivery Format &amp; Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test grouping</td>
<td>Provide login instructions and information</td>
<td>When they register for the test</td>
<td>The registration email students receive when they register for the EPT will contain information on the Online EPT website, enrollment key for the registered test window, and technical requirements. The enrollment key is generated by ATLAS or the EPT RA.</td>
<td>Email (From registration site)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pre-test grouping | Check technical requirements              | Before a student’s test window begins | Students will be asked to enroll in the Online EPT website prior to the start of the test window. When they enroll, they will receive a list of things to check prior to taking the test. The list contains the following information:  
- Install Firefox (recommended by ATLAS)  
- Check JAVA  
- Check audio (audio activity provided in Moodle)  
- Check video (video activity provided in Moodle)  
- Check audio recorder (For Oral task; For Fall 2012, Wimba was used. For Fall 2013, CLEAR was used.) | Moodle Testing site                               |
| Active test grouping | Explanation of Online EPT and Topic Introduction | 10 min         | The introduction video explains the test process and introduces the topic.                                                                                                                                   | Moodle Video                                     |
| Active test grouping | Article Reading                            | 20 min           | Students read a reading text (Allow note taking)                                                                                                                                                           | Moodle Quiz                                      |
| Active test grouping | Mini Lecture                              | 10 min           | The lecture (video) provides students with information on the topic and allows for discussion. (Allow note taking) Students can watch the lecture once.                                                       | Moodle Video                                     |
| Active test grouping | Discussion Forum | Available for 48 hours once the test is available | There will be 3-4 basic questions provided. Students can participate in the forum by responding to the provided questions or adding other questions to develop the discussion. | Moodle Forum |
| Active test grouping | Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity. | 5 min | The video explains the scoring criteria to help students’ essay writing. This step can be helpful to students when setting strategies for the writing tasks. The video also explains the UIUC Student Code on academic integrity and clarifies the consequences of academic dishonesty. After students watch the video, they will read an Academic Integrity Agreement Form and will be asked to check that they agree to the content of the form. | Moodle Video (Academic integrity Information and scoring rubric video) Moodle Quiz |
| Active test grouping | Writing Task | 90 min | Students write the essay based on the information provided in the article and lecture. Students are provided with the article, an essay outline worksheet, and revision questions for assistance with writing the final essay. Students have one attempt to write the essay. Once students submit the essay, they cannot revise it. | Moodle Quiz |
| Active test grouping | Oral Phase I | 10 min (Activity is available for 48 hours.) | Students get one attempt to record their answers to a given question. Students can record their answers anytime within the 48-hour test window. | Moodle Quiz (embed MSU CLEAR) |
| Post-test grouping | Check scores | | Students get instructions on checking and interpreting scores. | Moodle test site |
Students must complete all required tasks. Only the final draft submitted in the Writing Task activity will be rated for placement decision.

The previous version of the online EPT had three writing tasks: first draft task, revision task, and final draft task. Based on the feedback from Summer 2011 online trial test-takers, the three separate writing tasks were reduced to one writing task that provides all the same materials. The instruction for the writing task recommends students to use the outline worksheet (first writing task) and revision questions (revision) to perform better on the writing task. The previous version gave students 20 minutes for first draft, another 20 minutes for revision, and 60 minutes for the final draft task. The current writing task is 90 minutes in total and asks students to use the outline worksheet and revision questions to help them write their final drafts.

In addition, the previous version of the online EPT had an Academic Integrity Agreement Form Submission activity where students were required to download, read, sign, and submit a word document to show that they understand academic integrity and the consequences if they do not follow the student code of conduct. This involved too many steps so the activity was shortened to a quiz where the students would read the form and click to agree to the content of the form.

4.2. Reading Article

a. The level of the information should be general and academic, but not too technical.
b. The content should be culturally appropriate.
c. The length of the reading text is permitted to range from 600 to 750 words.
d. It should discuss the same thematic topic as the lecture.
e. It should contain information which is related to but different from those of the lecture (e.g. general vs. specific information; opposing viewpoints; theory vs. application, simplified view vs. complicated view, less information vs. more information, etc.). As a general rule, there should be a balance in evidence to support and to oppose the essay question. The balance in information will help the test-taker choose a side and use the information in the article to support his/her arguments. It is important to provide facts (i.e. statistics, quotes from research, results from research) in the article from both sides that test-takers can use as supporting evidence.
f. It can be selected from authentic college textbooks, journal articles of non-technical nature, prestigious magazines or newspapers. In this case, the reference citation should not appear in the reading text for the sake of test security, but should be noted in test archives.
g. It can be written, rewritten, or edited by native speakers of English on the basis of authentic materials to strengthen its link with the mini-lecture or to adjust the level of readability.
h. See Checklist for Congruence Checking.
i. Students will read the article for 20 minutes as the first activity of the written exam. The students will have access to the
article during the “Writing Task” activity.

4.3. Mini Lecture
   a. The level of information should be general and academic, but not too technical.
   b. The content should be culturally appropriate and the same thematic topic as the reading article.
   c. The length of the lecture should range from 4 to 6 minutes when read at a natural speed. The recommended length of the lecture script is approximately 500 words.
   d. An outline of the lecture is provided to the students on the screen via a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate presenting the information in the lecture. The quality of the aids should be ensured so that examinees can actually take advantage of those aids to process the information. The lecture script is not shared with the students.
   e. The lecture should contain information on the general advantages and disadvantages (or pros and cons) of the particular writing topic to accompany the reading article.
   f. The lecture is in the form of monologue.
   g. Students will watch the mini lecture once. Neither the script of the mini lecture nor the outline powerpoint will be shared with the students after the completion of the “Mini Lecture” activity.

4.4. PowerPoint slides to accompany Mini Lecture
   a. The slides should outline the information in the Mini Lecture.
   b. The slides should have white background and black text.
   c. The title slide should show the topic in keywords (i.e. Global Warming, Globalization). Font Calibri, size 44.
   d. The heading for each body slide should be “Keyword (Lecture)” (i.e. Global Warming (Lecture)). Font Calibri, size 44.
   e. Body slide text: Use Calibri (font) and font size should be around 28-32.
   f. The first slide is to provide background information and/or keyword definition of the topic. The content should match the lecture.
   g. The other slides should show relevant topics (pros vs. cons) outlining the content of the Mini Lecture.
   h. Around 5-7 slides in total including the title slide.

4.5. Discussion Questions
   a. The purpose of the discussion questions is to help students brainstorm prior to writing the essay.
   b. There are usually 3-4 questions.
c. The questions ask for: examples regarding the topic; positive and negative effects of the topic, how the topic has impacted a person’s life; what their opinions are regarding the topic.  

d. These questions are posted in the Discussion Forum to initiate discussion.

5. **Moodle**

The Online EPT will be administered using the ATLAS Moodle server. Each task (procedures 2-6) is presented as a topic. Students will complete each task in order.

5.1. **Layout of Moodle**

5.2. **Introduction Video**

An EPT introduction video will explain the procedure of the test and the expected outcome (argumentative essay) of the test, similar to the on-campus test. The EPT introduction video will explain each task briefly in order, explain the goal of the test, and introduce the topic. At the beginning of each activity of the test, an introduction video will give an overview of the activity and how to use Moodle to complete the task. The video will demonstrate the activity step-by-step. The video will be produced using Jing, Camtasia, or other video/audio capture tool. The voice will be recorded using Audacity, Camtasia, Jing, or other digital audio recording tool. The video to introduce the activities will provide step-by-step procedures on what the students need to do in order to successfully complete each activity. Sample videos are provided in the secure EPTDb server.

5.3. **Student grouping**

a. There are three groupings in Moodle: Pre-test grouping, Active test grouping, and Post-test grouping. Students are divided up into “Groups” based on their test-windows. Each “Group” is also categorized into “Groupings” depending on whether the group has not started the test (Pre-test), is taking the test (Active test), or has completed the test (Post-test).

b. **Pre-Test Grouping:** This grouping is where ALL groups start out during the beginning of the EPT period. The number of Groups in this Grouping decreases each week as one group leaves this grouping to go to the Active Test Grouping.

c. **Active Test Grouping:** This Grouping should only have ONE group in it at any given point in the EPT test window period.

d. **Post-Test Grouping:** This Grouping is EMPTY at the start of the BEGINNING of the EPT period; HOWEVER it should be GROWING during the EPT period because each group should move into it after its test period has ended.
e. The information in the Moodle site is divided up into Groupings to make sure that each Grouping gets the necessary information depending on their test-taking stage.

f. The EPT RA has to move a particular Test Window Group from the Pre-test Grouping to the Active Test Grouping approximately 5 minutes prior to start of the test. Once the test window period is over, the EPT RA has to move the group in the Active Test Grouping to the Post-test Grouping. This entire procedure has to be done once each week. The EPT RA should check each week to make sure that the necessary information and activities are displayed to the appropriate groups and groupings.

g. The Group and Grouping idea came out during an EPT-ATLAS meeting. This was a solution to provide different information to test-takers depending on their test-taking stage.

6. Video making/recording for Moodle

In Fall 2012, all the recordings were done in the EPT office using the Camtasia recorder. The voice for all the videos was Prof. Fred Davidson. In Fall 2013, the EPT received funding to recruit voice talent (one male and one female) from the Department of Theater at UIUC.

6.1. There are two kinds of recordings: Recording of directions and recording of mini-lecture

6.2. Recording of Directions

Purpose: to provide clear instructions on the goal of the test/activity and to explain features available in the test website that will be used in the test/activity

Recording Attributes:

- Monologue
- Articulate each word with precision.
- Slower than normal speech rate. In previous recordings by Prof. Davidson, approximately 21 words were spoken in a 10-second time frame.
- 1.5 second pause between each sentence.
- Teacher-like instructional voice and tone that is somewhat monotonous.
- Clarity is a must.

Voice Attributes:
• Teaching experience is an advantage.
• Educational recording or voice-over experience would be advantageous.
• Male or Female.
• Should use Standard English.
• Different voice from the lecture (optional based on circumstances).
• Clear, crisp voice
• Age range: 20s-50s

6.3. Recording of mini lecture

Purpose: to provide information on a given topic in a lecture form. The lecture is accompanied by presentation slides with key phrases and terms. Test-takers listen to the mini lecture once and are encouraged to take notes during the lecture.

Recording Attributes:
• Monologue
• Lecture-like, natural speech that is more expressive compared to the direction recording but not to the point that the speech sounds too fast. In previous recordings by Prof. Davidson, approximately 21 words were spoken in a 10-second time frame.

6.4. Cautions and tips for audio recording

a. Avoid recording the script once only. Try to record various speech rates (slow vs. fast) and try different tones of voice (lower tone vs. higher tone vs. regular tone) when ask a talent to record the script
b. Don’t let talents improvise the scripts without any consultation with the EPT RA
(The RA should check that the revised script does not affect the questions or responses)

6.5. Recruiting voice talent

The EPT RA sent an email to the Department of Theatre for assistance in circulating the announcement for recruiting voice talent for educational purposes. Only undergraduate students currently enrolled in UIUC were considered. Below is a sample of the announcement.
Interested in earning some extra pocket money?
The English Placement Test (EPT) in the Department of Linguistics is looking for acting students to do recordings for the Online EPT.*
You will be paid $**.* per hour.

Job description:

- To do voice recordings for monologues based on written scripts
- Recordings will be conducted * times during the month of May and early June 2013. The first recording is May 10.
  Subsequent recordings will be scheduled approximately 2 or 3 weeks later.
- We anticipate that each recording session will take approximately 1-2 hours.
- Must also be available for re-recording, if necessary
- Both males and females can apply.

Eligibility:

- Native speakers of English
- Acting experience and demonstrable ability to take direction as well as give us feedback about our scripts.

To apply, please send a c.v. and/or description of your interests and background to eptillinois@illinois.edu. In the email, please send us a short recording (approximately 1 minute long) introducing yourself and your interests.

*for more information about the EPT, please visit:

http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement/

Updated April 8, 2013

6.6. Voice talent auditioning and training

During auditions, look for the following qualities: 1) voice quality (monologue), 2) ability to take directions, 3) understanding of the purpose of the prompt.

After hiring voice talent, train the voice talent by: 1) offering speech samples, 2) clearly specifying the accent, dialect, and tone that is expected of the talent, 3) rehearsing and revising the text to ensure that the scripts are authentic.

6.7. Recording

For Fall 2012, recordings were done in the EPT office. For Fall 2013, recording with voice talent was done in the UIUC SLCL phonology lab. Recordings were edited by the EPT RA using Camtasia.
7. Rating
   7.1. The grading system involves expert judgment by raters who have received training in using the UIUC EPT holistic essay scoring scale (known as "the benchmarks"). At the beginning of each grading session, the raters will read the lecture script and the reading passage. The raters will then recalibrate their level-scales by discussing the match between the quality of essays and the level of ESL courses needed. Each essay will be graded blindly by two raters. If the two raters cannot agree on the placement, a third rater will be asked to further evaluate the examinees' essays. The final placement will be made on the basis of the match between the third rater and either of the first two raters. If the decision cannot be made, the ESL Writing Coordinator will make the final placement decision. The raters complete the rating on the test day in order to provide test takers results the next business day. Generally, the following criteria will be used to grade examinees' essays:

   - The essay should have a clear introduction, body and conclusion.
   - The ideas within the essay should be explicitly connected.
   - The ideas should be supported with evidence from both the lecture and the reading.
   - The essay should be written in examinees' own words. Information cannot be reproduced directly from the lecture or the reading text. When using information from the lecture and the reading, examinees should correctly cite the source(s).
   - The essay should demonstrate the use of standard grammatical conventions.

8. Specification Supplement (SS)
   8.1. Moodle site
       The Moodle site for the Online EPT is provided by ATLAS. ATLAS provides technical assistance. The current contact people (Fall 2013) are Jim Witte, Pamela Williams, and Sazia Zaman (grad RA).

   8.2. Registration information
       Registration is online and is available approximately one month prior to the first day of testing each semester. The registration information and link can be found at http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement/

   8.3. Role of the EPT R.A.
       The EPT R.A. overlooks the entire testing procedure from setting test dates and reserving test rooms to reporting test results to analyzing results.

       The EPT R.A.:
       - checks all testing materials in advance for completeness and accuracy
• adapts and develops test materials as needed
• creates "duty roster" per feedback from program coordinators
• helps to proctor every test administration
• organizes oral interviews
• trains workers for EPT-related duties
• supervises all EPT proctors and oral interviewers
• organizes all "special" EPT administrations by contacting program directors to set up the EPT date
• soliciting workers (proctors, essay raters, advisors, and oral interviewers) for the EPT
• recording workers’ hours and calculating expenses for reimbursement from the departments

To efficiently and effectively handle the EPT database, the EPT R.A. must handle the following tasks in a timely manner:
• input test scores
• produce and report EPT results for various parties, e.g., students, ESL TAs, students’ departments, the Graduate College, ATLAS, undergraduate advisors, and CTE
• respond appropriately (under the supervision of Prof. Fred Davidson) to requests from researchers (mainly graduate students) regarding EPT-related information
• investigate and resolve problems related to students’ EPT results and the fulfillment of their ESL requirements
• respond appropriately to requests from other programs on EPT-related information and data analyses

8.4. Qualification for essay rater
• has taught at least one semester in the ESL writing service courses at UIUC
• has been trained by the ESL writing courses coordinator (training held at the beginning of each Spring semester)

8.5. Qualification for EPT interviewer
• Completion of EIL 488
• recommendation from Prof. Dickerson.
8.6. Qualification for EPT Summer RA
The EPT hires two additional RAs (25% each) for Summer I and II to assist in the administration and development of the EPT.
Qualifications:
(1) Required: completion of EIL 460 (Language Testing) with Professor Davidson
(2) Required: legally permitted to work for UIUC
(3) Preferred: experience in the ESL service program

Duties
The main duty is to assist in the administration of the Online EPT. Other duties include the following:

(A) Assist in the development and administration of the Online EPT
(B) Study and become familiar with EPT test specifications.
(C) Provide feedback on those specs
(D) Provide feedback on test content
(E) Produce test content based on the test specs
## Checklist for Congruence Checking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of article design</th>
<th>Checklist</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. The topic of the article is appropriate for the general academic audience at the university level.</strong></td>
<td>The topic of the article is general enough so that students from all around the world could relate to it. The topic of the reading article is (check all that apply) a. Internet use, b. Education, c. Sports, d. Social issues, e. Other current issues/debates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. The content is appropriate (the content does not contain offensive content)</strong></td>
<td>Is there anything that may be offensive to certain cultures? Please check all that apply. a. genders, b. religions, c. political stance, d. others (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. The article discusses the same thematic topic as the lecture.</strong></td>
<td>Did the article discuss the same thematic topic as the lecture? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. The organization of the article is appropriate for the general academic audience at the university level.</strong></td>
<td>What is the organization of the article? Please check all that apply: a. Persuasive b. Cause and effect c. Simple listing d. Compare and contrast e. Argumentative f. Process description g. Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. The length of the article is sufficient.</strong></td>
<td>Is the length of the article between 600 and 750 words? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. The content contains enough information for students on either side of the argument to write an essay.</strong></td>
<td>What kinds of contrasting views were presented in the article? Please check all that apply. a. general vs. specific information; b. opposing viewpoints; c. theory vs. application, d. simplified view vs. complicated view, e. less information vs. more information, f. other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. The level of the information in the article is appropriate for the general academic audience at the university level.</strong></td>
<td>a. Is it too easy or too difficult for students at the university level? Yes No b. Is there any culture-specific information that might be unfamiliar to students from various countries? Yes No c. Are there any phrases or vocabulary that might be unfamiliar to students from different countries? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The UIUC English Placement Test (EPT)
Written Exam

1 Explanation of the Online EPT and Topic Introduction

Directions: Click on the video link below. You will watch the video that explains the procedures for the EPT Written Test. You will watch the video once. The directions for the next step will be provided at the end of the introduction video so watch the entire video carefully.

NOTE: You MUST go through each activity of the test IN ORDER. DO NOT skip over activities as each activity is designed to build up to the next activity. You will get only ONE attempt per activity.

• The UIUC EPT Introduction Video

2 Article Reading

First, watch the "Article Reading Introduction Video" to get a preview of the activity and information on using the Moodle features used in the activity. After you watch the Article Reading Introduction Video, click on "Article Reading" below to start the activity.

In this activity, you will read an article on globalization. You will have 20 minutes to read the article. Please keep in mind that you are required to use the information from the article in your essay to build up your argument.

*Please note that the article will be available in following writing activities to help you when writing your essay.

Click to watch the Article Reading Introduction Video.

• Article Reading Introduction Video
Click below to start reading the article.

**Article Reading**

Once you have finished reading the article, please go to the next activity "Mini Lecture".

3 Mini Lecture

You will get an additional source of information: the Mini Lecture. Please take notes during the lecture. You will watch the lecture ONCE:

First, watch the "Mini Lecture Introduction Video" to get a preview of the activity.

Then, click on Mini Lecture to proceed to the activity.

Click to watch the Mini Lecture Introduction Video.

**Mini Lecture Introduction Video**

Click on "Mini Lecture" to start the activity.

**Mini Lecture**

Once you have finished watching the lecture, proceed to the next activity, "Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity".

4 Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity

You will watch "Rubric & Academic Integrity Video" that explains two things:

1) Explanation of the scoring criteria to help your essay writing. This step can be helpful when setting writing strategies.
2) The University of Illinois Student Code on academic integrity and the consequences of academic dishonesty.

After you watch the video, you will take a short quiz to read the Academic Integrity Agreement Form and agree to comply with all the conditions of the UIUC student academic rights and regulations. Your essay will NOT be graded if you do NOT agree to the academic rights and regulations.

Submit the Academic Integrity Agreement Quiz to certify that you understand and agree to comply with all the conditions of the UIUC student academic rights and regulations.

Click to watch the "Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity" video.
5 Writing Task

In the previous sections, you read an article and watched a lecture. Based on the information that you gathered from the two sources, you will write an argumentative essay.

First, watch the "Writing Task Introduction Video" to get a preview of the activity. Then, click on "Writing Task" to proceed to the activity. You will have 60 minutes to write your essay.

Keep in mind that you are required to use the information from the article and lecture in your essay to support your arguments.

Good luck!

Click to watch the "Writing Task Introduction" video.

Writing Task Introduction Video

Click below to start the Writing Task.

Writing Task

6 End of the EPT Written Exam

URL: https://testing.atlas.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=31
Pre-test message

Here are some very important things to check before you take the test.

- The best browser to access the test is Firefox (www.mozilla.org). Do not use Internet Explorer.
- Prepare a pair of earphones and a microphone and make sure they are working properly. A webcam is recommended but not required.
- Make sure that your computer has the latest version of Java (www.java.com) installed.
- Make sure that your computer has the latest version of Adobe Flash (http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer) installed.
- Have your UIC email and AU password available.
- You MUST complete the EPT Demo Quiz to make sure your computer is set up to take the test.
- You MUST watch the EPT Demo Video to make sure your computer is set up to take the test.

If you have done all of the above, you are ready for the EPT.

If you need assistance, you should send an email to the EPT advisor at eptillinois@illinois.edu.

Keep in mind that our office hours are Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, US Central Time.

Your test will be available on your registered test window start date.

EPT Video Demo
EPT Quiz Demo
EPT Recording Quiz Demo

Topic 1

Topic 2

Topic 3
Active Test

Here are some very important things to check before you take the test.

- The best browser to access the test is Firefox (www.mozilla.org). Do not use Internet Explorer.
- Prepare a pair of earphones and a microphone and make sure they are working properly. A webcam is recommended but not required.
- Make sure that your computer has the latest version of Java (www.java.com) installed.
- Make sure that your computer has the latest version of Adobe Flash (http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/oldversions) installed.
- Have your UUC NetID and AD password available.
- You MUST complete the EPT Demo Quiz to make sure your computer is set up to take the test.
- You MUST watch the EPT Demo Video to make sure your computer is set up to take the test.

If you have done all of the above, you are ready for the EPT.

If you need assistance, you should send an email to the EPT advisor at eptillinois@illinois.edu.

Keep in mind that our office hours are Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, US Central Time.

Your results will be available within 2 business days after the end of your test window. You will receive an email when your EPT results are available.
Topic 1

Explanation of the EPT

Directions: Click on the video link below. You will watch the video that explains the procedures for the EPT. The directions for the next step will be provided at the end of the introduction video so watch the entire video carefully.

NOTE: You MUST go through each activity of the test IN ORDER. DO NOT skip over activities as each activity is designed to build up to the next activity.

Watch the UUC EPT Introduction Video

Topic 2

EPT Writing Section

Topic 3

EPT Article, Lecture, and Forum

In the writing section of the EPT, you will write an argumentative essay on a given topic. In order to help you write the essay, we will provide you with two sources, a reading text and a video lecture. The resources are provided below.

After getting information about the topic from the two sources, you will be given an opportunity to interact with your peers about the topic through an online forum.

The article, lecture, and forum will be available from Monday noon US Central Time until Wednesday 11:59am US Central Time. You will be able to read the article and watch the lecture each once.

The essay writing task will go live Tuesday noon US Central Time until Wednesday 11:59am US Central Time. You will get only one attempt to write the essay. Once you open the writing task, you will have 1 hour and 30 minutes to finish the essay. Remember, you get only one attempt to write the essay.

You can participate in the forum to discuss the topic with your peers. You can respond to posts or start new discussion topics. This is to help you brainstorm ideas with your peers to gather further information about the topic. You can use the information in the forum to develop your ideas in the essay.

Watch the ‘Article Reading Task Introduction Video’

EPT Article (Demo)
EPT Mini Lecture (Demo)
EPT Discussion Forum (Demo)
Topic 4

Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity

You will watch the "Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity Video" that explains two things:

1) Explanation of the scoring criteria to help your essay writing. This step can be helpful when setting writing strategies.

2) The University of Illinois Student Code on academic integrity and the consequences of academic dishonesty.

After you watch the video, you must take a short quiz to read the Academic Integrity Agreement Form and agree to comply with all the conditions of the UUC student academic rights and regulations. Your essay will NOT be graded if you do NOT agree to the academic rights and regulations.

Submitting the Academic Integrity Agreement Quiz certifies that you understand and agree to comply with all the conditions of the UUC student academic rights and regulations.

Watch the "Explanation of Scoring Rubric and Academic Integrity Video"

Topic 5

Writing Task

In the previous sections, you read an article and watched a lecture. You also shared ideas and discussed the topic in the forum. Based on the information that you gathered from the two sources, you will write an essay.

First, watch the "Writing Task Introduction Video" to get a preview of the activity. Then, click on "Writing Task" to proceed to the activity. You will have 90 minutes to write your essay.

Keep in mind that you are required to use the information from the article and lecture in your essay to support your ideas.

The Writing Task will be available from Tuesday noon US Central Time until Wednesday 11:59 AM US Central Time.

Good luck!!

Watch the "Writing Task Introduction Video"
### Topic 7

**EPT Oral Phase 1**

In this activity, you are required to record a three-minute response to a given question. You will be assessed on your speaking ability, with specific concentration on your pronunciation skill.

Click on `Practice Oral Exam` to start the task. Follow the directions carefully. You will get one attempt to record your response.

You MUST complete the "Practice Oral Exam" to proceed to the actual Oral Phase 1 activity.

- [ ] Watch the "EPT Oral Phase 1 Introduction Video"
- Practice Oral Exam (Demo)

- [ ] EPT Oral Phase 1 (Test Window: August 12-14, 2013)
  
  Not available until you achieve a required score in Practice Oral Exam (Demo)

---

### Topic 8

**End of the EPT**

[University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](https://illinois.edu)

You are logged in as ept1@lastnameill.Logout

[Home]
Post test

You have finished the Online EPT. Your results will be available within 2 business days after the end of your test window.

You will receive an email when your EPT results are available.

If you need assistance, you should email the EPT advisor at eptillinois@illinois.edu.
Online EPT registration confirmation email

From: ATLAS Registration System [atlas@uiuc.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 27, 2012 10:29 AM
To: Chung, Sun Joo
Subject: [TESTING] EPT :: Registration Information

The link to the Online English Placement Test website is: https://testing.atlas.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=35
The enrollment key for your registered testing window is below in the 'Details' section next to the 'Online Exam' date you signed up for to take the exam.
Go to the Online English Placement Test website and enroll to get information on technical specifications that you will need to check before you take the test. The test window will begin at 12:00pm US Central Time of the specified start date and will run for 48 hours.
You will need a pair of earphones and a microphone to take the Online English Placement Test.
Below is a summary of your registration information. Also included is a 'User ID' and 'Password' that can be used to log back into the system. Once logged in you will have the ability to change your password, modify, cancel, and view your registration until 12:00 AM on Saturday, June 16, 2012.

*****************************************************************
REGISTRATION STATUS
Registered on Friday, April 27, 2012 at 10:29 AM
YOUR REGISTRATION CREDENTIALS
User ID: ChungSun2229
Password: 706CD1DEA7

PERSONAL INFORMATION
First Name: Sun Joo
Last Name: Chung
Gender: Female
Date of Birth: */*/****
Your U.S. Citizenship Status: F-1
UIN: ********
NetID: ******
Your Primary Email Address: ******@illinois.edu

DETAILS
Secondary Email Address: ******@gmail.com
STEP: Register for EPT
Online Exam: 5/14/2012  ax4f6y
College: Fine & Applied Arts
Fine & Applied Arts Major: Architectural Studies
Degree Expected: Bachelor's
Have You Taken The TOEFL?: No
Native Country: Korea (ROK)
Native Language: Korean

***********************************************************************
*** Please do not respond to this email ***

If you need personal assistance regarding the event and/or your registration, please contact:
Dept. of Linguistics: Sun Joo Chung
Email: *******@illinois.edu
Registration Site: https://webtest-s.las.illinois.edu/ATLASRegistration/?event=eptreg812
Technical problems should be reported to atlas-data@uiuc.edu
### The EPT Written Exam Benchmark

| Level 1 | Length insufficient to evaluate  
|         | No organization of ideas; no cohesion; like a free writing  
|         | Content marked by inaccuracies of source information, OR content is completely off-topic, OR majority of essay is copied  
|         | Grammatical and lexical errors are severe; no complexity; even simple sentences are flawed  

| Level 2 | Length may be insufficient to evaluate; may be off-topic  
|         | Elements of essay organization (Intro, Body and Conclusion) may be attempted, but are simplistic and ineffective  
|         | Essay may lack a central controlling idea (no thesis statement, OR thesis statement is flawed)  
|         | Essay does not flow smoothly; ideas are difficult to follow  
|         | Development of ideas is insufficient; examples may be inappropriate; logical sequencing may be flawed or incomplete  
|         | Paragraph structure not mastered; lack of main idea (topic sentence), focus, and cohesion  
|         | Summarizes/restates sources rather than uses them to support ideas  
|         | May lack synthesis of ideas (of the two sources or of sources and student’s own ideas)  
|         | May indicate misunderstanding of source material  
|         | Attempts to paraphrase are generally unskillful and inaccurate  
|         | Some overt plagiarism  
|         | Grammatical and lexical errors impede understanding; awkwardness of expression; general inaccuracy of word forms  
|         | Little sophistication in vocabulary and linguistic expression; little sentence variety; sentence complexity not mastered  

| Level 3 | Length is sufficient for full expression of ideas  
|         | Writes on topic  
|         | Elements of essay organization are clearly present, though they may be flawed  
|         | Attempt to advance a main idea; presence of thesis statement  

215
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contains an Intro, Body and Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear thesis statement, appropriately placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good development of thesis; logical sequencing; reasonable use of transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs are fairly cohesive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good synthesis of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of source content may contain minor inaccuracies, but good understanding is indicated; effective, skillful paraphrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources are cited, though possibly inaccurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May contain minor grammatical/lexical errors, but meaning is clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong linguistic expression exhibiting academic vocabulary, sentence variety and complexity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Flows somewhat smoothly
- Some development and elaboration of ideas; evidence of logical sequencing; transitions may show some inaccuracies
- Paragraph structure generally mastered, generally cohesive
- Attempts to use sources to advance the thesis; evidence of some synthesis of ideas
- Use of oral and written sources demonstrates basic understanding
- Covert plagiarism; attempted summary and paraphrase; may contain isolated instances of direct copying; may not cite sources, OR may cite them incorrectly
- Moderately successful paraphrase in terms of smoothness
- Some grammatical/lexical errors; meaning may be occasionally obscured, but essay is still comprehensible
- Inconsistent evidence of some sophistication in sentence variety and complexity
APPENDIX I: EPT ITEM DEVELOPMENT TEAM QUALIFICATIONS

Language test development RAships
Qualifications:
----------------
(1) Required: completion of EIL 460 (Language Testing).
(2) Required: legally permitted to work for UIUC (this pertains to visa status for visa-holders; it also pertains to point (c) under "to apply", below)
(3) Preferred: experience as a rater for the EPT
(4) Preferred: experience teaching ES/FL as a TA, tutor, or conversation partner
*Note: both graduate and undergraduate students may apply.

Duties:
-------
(1) Study and become thoroughly familiar with EPT test specifications.
(2) Produce test content based on those specs.
(3) Provide timely feedback on the specs and test content.
(4) Actively participate in the test content development process, with the ability to take initiative and work under deadlines.
(5) Demonstrate a reliable and diligent work ethic.

To apply:
---------
Send an email addressed to both: fgd@illinois.edu (Professor Davidson) and eptillinois@illinois.edu (EPT R.A.s). In the body of the email (NOT an attachment), state:
(a) your full name
(b) your UIN
(c) a complete description of all work you will be doing for hire -- state clearly if you can be hired further (e.g. students on visas may not work more than a 50 percent assistantship)
(d) a brief description of past work experience at UIUC
(e) a brief description of the three mini-papers you wrote in EIL 460 -- about a paragraph each; Current students in 460 may describe mini-paper one only

Deadline:
---------
NA
Duration:
---------
NA

*p.s. For information on the EPT, please see:
http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement/