The Oral English Proficiency Program (OEPP) at Purdue University is the academic unit on campus that implements the university policy on the hiring of teaching assistants whose first language is not English. The Oral English Proficiency Program

- Provides oral English proficiency screening services to all departments on campus that employ L2 speakers of English as teaching assistants;
- Certifies the oral English proficiency of teaching assistants whose first language is not English; and
- Offers English as a second language instruction to prospective teaching assistants.

The mission of the OEPP is to provide a supportive environment in which Purdue’s international students develop academic English proficiency across a wide array of domains and contexts. Screening of prospective teaching assistants is done by means of the Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT), a computer-based test developed in the OEPP. Instruction is through ENGL 620, a course developed and taught in the OEPP.

In this Issue
About the OEPT and ENGL620... p.2
OEPP Volunteer Program.......... p.3
Departmental Liaisons............. p.3
Non-Credit ESL Short Courses..... p.4
Former 620 Students............... p.4
Meet the Staff........................ p.5
2017-18 OEPP Summary.......... p.6

Khadeejah Alaslani and Michelle Campbell in their OEPP office- fall 2018.
ENGL 620

ENGL 62000, “Classroom communication in English as a second language (ESL) for international graduate students”, is open to students who have received a score of 40 or 45 on the Oral English Proficiency Test and been identified by their departments as potential TAs. Departments determine which students will receive priority for the course; Students may not enroll on their own.

The class follows an active learning model and focuses on classroom communication and presentation skills, strategies for overcoming language barriers, and conversational interaction skills. Students gain experience speaking English in a classroom context by giving presentations to and interacting with undergraduate volunteers who then provide individual feedback. Students also meet individually with language tutors every week. At the end of the semester most students are certified for oral English proficiency, and a small number are recommended to repeat the course.

ENGL 620 is a 5-credit hour course that does not contribute to a plan of study, but does count in total credit hours taken per semester.

About the OEPT

The Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT) is a computer-based test developed by the OEPP to screen prospective graduate TAs for English language proficiency. Because the test is computer mediated, all test takers experience the same test interface without the variability introduced by different test administrators in face-to-face interviews. Examinees respond to questions on a variety of topics and present and summarize information. Responses are recorded and then evaluated by at least two trained OEPT raters. A score of 50 or higher is required for certification.

Further information can be found at http://www.purdue.edu/oepp/oept
Undergraduate Volunteers Needed in the OEPP Volunteer Program!

Volunteers play a vital part in helping our international graduate students improve their communication skills. We get some volunteers from various fraternities, sororities and clubs on campus. However, most of our volunteers come from classes that offer some type of incentive to participate. Volunteers attend ENGL 620 classrooms to observe presentations, take part in Q&A sessions and give feedback to the graduate students.

Dr. Freddie Barnard, a professor of Agricultural Economics, believed that the OEPP volunteer program was very important for undergraduate education at Purdue. He began sending volunteers to the OEPP in 2005 by offering his students extra credit. From 2010 (when the OEPP started keeping records of volunteers) until his retirement in May 2018, Dr. Barnard’s students volunteered a total of 3,380 hours with the OEPP. Thank you, Dr. Barnard for your valuable help over the years! You hold the record for sending us the most volunteers!

Dr. Warren Dukes from Sociology began offering his students extra credit for volunteering in the OEPP in the summer of 2017. Summer is a particularly difficult time to recruit undergraduate volunteers because so many undergraduates are off campus. Dr. Dukes feels that connecting his SOC 310 students with the OEPP volunteer initiative was a natural fit. Thank you, Dr. Dukes, for stepping up!

Jake Zucker, a recent MFA graduate in English, has sent many of his Business English students to volunteer for us. Students who are developing their resumes in his class often find our Intercultural Communication Partner Certificate a bonus that they can add to their resumes as evidence of cultural diversity experience.

We need volunteers for our summer classes! Are you willing to offer an incentive to your summer students for volunteering for us? Contact Beth Lageveen at blagevee@purdue.edu.

OEPP Departmental Liaisons

Departmental Liaisons are the link between the OEPP and the International Graduate Students needing our services. There are almost 100 departments that use the OEPP for testing students with the OEPT and instructing students in the English 620 course. The OEPP does not deal directly with student requests for our services; we only take requests from the departments. Therefore, we depend a great deal on all of our Liaisons to determine which students will be tested or enrolled in our English 620 course. Without our departmental Liaisons, we could not run the OEPP efficiently.

Stacy Lane has been the OEPP Liaison in CIT for 11 years.

Sandy Formica, OEPP Liaison in Physics, has been in Physics for close to 40 years!
PLaCE Short Courses in ESL (English as a Second Language)

PLaCE (The Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange) is an instructional unit at Purdue that offers dozens of FREE, non-credit, ESL Short Courses for international students. These courses are designed to help students improve language and cultural skills while at Purdue. Each course is taught by a qualified and enthusiastic PLaCE instructor, with an emphasis on self-regulated learning, cultural and communication skills, and lots of fun practice. Students also have the chance to make new connections with other international students.

The PLaCE Short Courses cover a range of topics, but here are some of the highlights: writing workshops, academic and social conversation, pronunciation, presentations and public speaking skills, vocabulary development, idioms, and reading fluency. New courses are being developed, based on student needs and feedback.

The PLaCE Short Courses are unique: the number of students per course is small, instructors spend time working with students in a very personal way, and there are no enrollment fees.

Short Courses offered in the summer will be intensive and of short duration (from 4 days to 2 weeks). Short Courses offered in the Spring and Fall semesters last 6 weeks. Students are encouraged to sign up early, as classes tend to fill up quickly. Go to purdue.edu/place for more information about course offerings and registration. Summer short course information will be posted on May 1.

The OEPP encourages all second language English speakers to check out the PLaCE Short Course offerings. We especially encourage students who do not pass the OEPT and intend to re-test later to take speaking short courses in the interim. Even students who have taken or are taking ENGL 620 can benefit from PLaCE Short Courses. There are courses of potential interest to everyone.

ENGL 620 Student Reflections from Fall 2018

Jinming Zhang
Throughout the semester in ENGL 620, I saw my improvements in oral English. First, by comparing my PR1 and PR4, I noticed that there are several things I developed. First, I learned how to give a proper communication statement and how important it is. Second, I learned how to involve and interact with my audience by simple comprehension checks and questions. Third, I got familiar with the entire Q&A procedure and how to clarify or to seek clarifications during the process. Fourth, I developed my projection, volume and time control of presentations. Fifth, I became better at using the board, visual aids and my handouts. Sixth, I reduced my grammatical errors in my presentation. Last but not least, personally, I felt more comfortable and confident when speaking in front of public. Overall, after this course, up to this point, I think I am ready to be a TA in terms of oral English.

Dake Mao
I want to use a Chinese saying to overview ENG 620: “Destroy and Construct”. OEPT and ENGL 620 broke my confidence of speaking English but reconstructed it during this semester. Consequently, I could thoroughly regulate and change my incorrect oral English. This course was extremely high-load compared to my chemistry 600-level courses, but each step was meaningful and valuable for me to have a better performance in the future TA work.
Kyongson Park, OEPP Instructor

My name is Kyongson Park. I go by Sonny in the OEPP. I am a doctoral candidate in English at Purdue and have been working in the OEPP for 4 years as an ENGL 620 instructor. Originally, I am from South Korea but I got my citizenship in Indiana. I am teaching and helping international graduate students improve their language and presentation skills. This is a very rewarding experience for me as students and I grow together as better teachers and educators. In my leisure time, I like listening to all kinds of music, playing piano, and spending time with my family. I would say that the OEPP is the best working place for me due to our teamwork and supportive colleagues and staff. It is a place of growth for teachers and students and I really enjoyed working with them.

Ji-young Shin, OEPP Testing Office Assistant & Instructor

My name is Ji-young Shin, and I am from South Korea. I am a 4th-year PhD student in the Second Language Studies/ESL program in the English department. I started working in the OEPP as an instructor in Fall 2017. Teaching ENGL 620 has enriched me both professionally and personally by exposing me to various cultures and disciplines. Currently, I am a graduate assistant in the testing office, and my main responsibilities include regular test administration and data analysis for the test quality of the OEPT. The work is closely related to my research interest, language testing and assessment, and I really enjoy and benefit from the first-hand experience.

Khadeeja Alaslani, OEPP Instructor

I’ve worked as an Instructor for the OEPP since Fall 2017. I am from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. My responsibilities in the OEPP, besides teaching, also include rating the Oral English Proficiency Test. I believe that teaching is a continuous learning process and that teachers should go on learning every day. I specifically enjoy learning about all the different fields of study my students are pursuing. Every semester, I and my students plan a gathering at the end of the semester and meet for lunch or dinner to celebrate their achievements together! When I am at home, I enjoy spending time with my husband and our children, having FaceTime conversations with my family overseas, reading, and visiting friends. I also like to search on the internet to develop myself.

Sharry Vahed, OEPP Testing Office Assistant

I am a Testing Office Assistant in the OEPP. My main responsibility is to administer the OEPT test and run statistical analyses on our monthly data to obtain information about how the test is working. I also write reports for the graduate school and departments that send their students to take our test. My research interest is in Language Testing and Assessment, and I am in my third year of the Second Language Studies PhD program. When I am not working or studying, I like to play volleyball! I play volleyball five days a week and enjoy it very much.

Morgan Neace, OEPP Tutor

I am originally from Lapel, Indiana. I came to Purdue to pursue a master’s degree in speech-language pathology. I have worked as a tutor in the OEPP for four semesters. As a tutor, I work one-on-one with international graduate students to improve their oral English skills. I have met students from around the world during my time with the OEPP. In my free time, I love to travel to new places, visit national parks, and read.
SUMMARY OF OEPP ACTIVITIES
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018

Number of OEPT tests administered: 572
Total number of test ratings done by all OEPT raters: 1564
Percentage of OEPT examinees who took the OEPT Practice Tests: 90%
Number of graduate student enrollments in ENGL 620: 223
Number of undergraduate students who volunteered for the OEPP: 1536
Total number of hours volunteers spent in ENGL 620 classrooms: 2869

Contact us:

Oral English Proficiency Program
155 S. Grant Street
810 Young Hall
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114
http://www.purdue.edu/oep
(765) 494-9380
oepp@purdue.edu