

ITA Program
ITA screening information
Academic Year 2024-2025

Background

International graduate students are a vital part of the Georgia Tech experience!

Along with their intellectual and social contributions to the institute, they often serve as part of the teaching community in various ways. One of these ways is as a teaching assistant. As a teaching assistant, a graduate student may be asked to grade papers, monitor tests or exams, oversee a lab, hold recitation sessions, work as a tutor, or even teach a class or course. In preparation for these duties, the University System of Georgia (USG) is required by the State of Georgia to screen international students for language proficiency in teaching prior to being appointed a TA, as follows:

University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents Policy:
8.3.5.2 Graduate Assistants

USG institutions employing graduate assistants shall develop procedures to:

1. Provide appropriate training to support and enhance these assistants' teaching effectiveness;
2. Conduct regular assessments of and annually evaluate, based on written procedures and including results of student and faculty evaluations, of each assistant's teaching effectiveness and performance; and,
3. **Assess competency in English and, if needed, provide training in English language proficiency.**

At Georgia Tech, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) administers the screenings and offers training for international teaching assistants (ITAs). To that end, the following description and procedures are in place for ITA screening. To go directly to the ITA homepage: <https://ita.ctl.gatech.edu/>
For more on CTL, see: <https://ctl.gatech.edu/>

Questions about the ITA Program?
Sarah Kegley at skegley3@gatech.edu



What is the ITA screening?

- The ITA screening assessment was developed by TESOL experts to assess prospective ITAs' ability to communicate with sufficient accuracy and interpersonal communicative competence to successfully work with undergraduate students at Georgia Tech.
- It is a face-to-face interview that takes place before the student begins to TA. This screening is meant to elicit English language skills necessary for effective communication within typical TA & pedagogical settings in the U.S. academic context.
- It is **not** a test of your knowledge in your field of study; it **is** designed to elicit language, however, in order to assess competence using terminology within your academic discipline as well as your competency and skill in negotiating meaning with undergraduate students, including engaging with student questions and responses.
- The test is not specifically a test of teaching, either. Instead, it is meant to assess competency of the use of language necessary to complete teaching tasks effectively.

Who must take the ITA screening test?

- International students **who are required to submit TOEFL (or IELTS, or other language test score) for admission**, and whose TOEFL speaking sub-score is below 26 (or below IELTS 8.0, or the equivalent on other instruments)
 - **What if I was a TA at another university before coming to GT?**
If you were a *graduate* TA at another institution before coming to GT, please participate in the ITA screening; this will ensure that we are following USG and GT policy.

What is the test like?

- No advance preparation is necessary!
- The (virtual) face-to-face test is structured to last 20 to 30 minutes, and consists of the following three components, all with a "live" interviewer:
 - Introductory question/answer segment.
 - Sample delivery of a field-specific concept, interpretation of an academic visual, and/or discussion of common academic topics.
 - Simulation of an office-hour interaction between a TA and student.
- The ITA screening assesses five general categories of language use: grammar, fluency, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and discourse/strategic competency.

ITA screening procedures

1. Once a graduate student has been *admitted* to Georgia Tech, their school TA coordinator will identify those who may be asked to serve as TAs.
2. The ITA program manager will contact each student at the email you have given to admissions (not your GT email unless it is already active).
3. The ITA screening assessment is administered via *Zoom*.
4. **You will need a microphone and camera, and your passport with photo** (or other approved ID). The screenings will be recorded for 2nd raters; after rating, recordings will be deleted within 3 months.
 - a. The results of the screening, along with recommendations, will be sent to the student's departmental TA coordinator within one week of the screening.
5. Screenings are currently being offered on a rolling basis. If you plan to TA in Fall 2024, please complete the screening before July 30th! If you plan to TA within the next two years, you should go ahead and complete the screening now.

Results and ITA coursework/support

- The screening assessment tool is used to refer ITAs for enrollment in **CETL 8802, International TA Development**, a language and culture support course, and to determine follow-up professional development in pedagogy. **CETL 8802** is a two-credit, pass/fail course.
- The recommended course should be completed in or before the first semester of the TA assignment and will be required for continued assignment to TA positions.
- After screening recommendations, the CTL International TA program manager will be happy to discuss your needs and create a plan for TA support with you.

Final notes on the ITA program screening for AY 2024-2025

Serving as a TA can be an exciting and challenging opportunity for any graduate student. International graduate students have unique needs as they begin these new responsibilities, often in a new language and a new educational culture. Through assessment and support, the International TA Program ensures international TAs are prepared for success in this role. The most important factor for the ITA screening is confidence and command of the appropriate level of speaking and listening proficiency to take on the challenging responsibilities of teaching in academic English within the Georgia Tech environment.

Note: Students who believe they need extensive language training (in writing and/or speaking and listening) are strongly encouraged to contact the *Georgia Tech Language Institute* at <https://esl.gatech.edu/> for more options.

Questions about the ITA Program or assessment procedures should be directed to Sarah Kegley, Center for Teaching and Learning, skegley3@gatech.edu