

# COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

## OFFICIAL POLICY

12.6.2

**English Fluency Policy**

10/5/2020

### **Policy Statement**

Under the provisions of the 1991 English Fluency in Higher Education Act, the South Carolina legislature has mandated that each public institution of higher learning establish a mechanism to “ensure that the instructional faculty whose second language is English possesses adequate proficiency in both the written and spoken English language.” Additionally, the act requires that the institutions “provide students with a grievance procedure regarding an instructor who is not able to write or speak the English language.”

A student/faculty ad hoc committee was formed and based upon its recommendation, the following policy is adopted.

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### **Policy Manager and Responsible Department or Office**

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#### **1.0 PRIMARY GOAL**

One of the primary goals of the College of Charleston is to provide an environment that encourages students to develop an awareness of and a heightened sensitivity towards the individual’s relationship with society within the context of a global perspective. One means

to achieve this goal is to foster cultural and ethnic diversity within the academic community. College response has been positive in this regard as evidenced by a steady increase in the population of both international students and faculty in diverse disciplines.

## **2.0 WHEN ENGLISH IS NOT FACULTY MEMBER'S PRIMARY LANGUAGE**

The College also takes great pride in maintaining a faculty who are well prepared in their respective academic areas, and most importantly, demonstrate the ability to communicate this knowledge effectively to their students.

In some instances problems can arise for instructors whose primary language is not American English. Effective interaction with students could be severely hampered by insufficient control of English grammar and pronunciation. In most situations, when an instructor speaks with an accent and experiences some difficulty in grammatical usage, students will quickly adjust to the uniqueness of these speech patterns and communication is not affected. Occasionally, however, the most sincere efforts of a well-prepared and scholarly individual will fail because of his or her difficulties with some aspects of the English language.

## **3.0 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES**

In 1986, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed proficiency guidelines addressing performance in speaking and writing abilities in a second language. These guidelines identify stages of proficiency which are intended to allow assessment of what an individual can and cannot do with regard to a particular language skill. In order to ensure that effective communication is not hampered by insufficient control of the pronunciation and grammar of American English, it is recommended that a prospective candidate perform at an advanced level of speaking and writing proficiency.

## **4.0 ASSESSING COMPETENCY LEVEL OF ENGLISH**

The following description is provided to assist the faculty in assessing the competency level of English language usage of a candidate.

### **4.1 SPEAKING ENGLISH**

For speaking, an advanced level is characterized by the speaker's ability to:

- (a) Converse in a clearly participatory fashion.
- (b) Handle with confidence but perhaps not with facility complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining, and apologizing.
- (c) Narrate and describe in the present and past tense with some details, linking sentences together smoothly in paragraph-length discourse.

(d) Communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings often can be smoothed over by communicative strategies, such as pause fillers, stalling devices, and different rates of speech. Some groping for words may be evident, but paraphrasing and rephrasing because of vocabulary or syntactic limitation is usually quite successful.

(e) Pronunciation, though perhaps marked, should not impede comprehension of speech.

(f) An advanced-level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native speakers.

## **4.2 WRITING ENGLISH**

For writing, an advanced level is characterized by the writer's ability to:

(a) Write cohesive summaries and resumés, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature, although he or she may still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols.

(b) Demonstrate good control of word formation and the most frequently used grammatical structures, e.g. common word order patterns, conjunctions, and subordinate clauses, but may make frequent errors in producing complex sentences.

(c) Write with a sense of organization and style approaching English written discourse, but may still resemble literal translations from the native language. Writing is understandable to natives not used to the writing of non-natives.

## **5.0 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Those students who believe that a faculty member is unable to write or speak English pursuant to the guidelines set forth above may use the section on student grievance procedures found in the College of Charleston Student Handbook to resolve this matter.

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### **Departments/Offices Affected by the Policy**

All College of Charleston Departments and Offices

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**Procedures Related to the Policy**

12.6.1 Student Grievances

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**Related Policies, Documents or Forms**

The Student Handbook

<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/2015-2016-student-handbook.pdf>

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**Issue Date: 6/29/2016**  
**Date of Policy Review: 10/5/2020**

**Next Review Date: 10/29/2025**

**POLICY APPROVAL**

**(For use by the Office of the Board of Trustees or the Office of the President)**

**Policy Number: 12.6.2**

**President or**

**Chairman, Board of Trustees**



**Date: 10/5/2020**