



SCHOOL OF  
LANGUAGE  
STUDIES

VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## 2017 VIU SLS Student Handbook

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Program at VIU provides quality English language instruction for students whose native language is not English. The program focuses on helping students develop sufficient language proficiency and skills for successful study at an American university or college. We offer seven levels of intensive English instruction: Low Beginner (200), Beginner (300), Elementary (400), Low Intermediate (500), Intermediate (600), High Intermediate (700), and Advanced (800).

### Program Structure:

Level	Courses	
Low Beginner (200)	<p><b>2 core courses:</b> Speaking, Listening &amp; Pronunciation Reading, Writing &amp; Grammar</p> <p><b>Levels 0200 – 0500 are Foundation Level Courses</b></p>	
Beginner (300)		
Elementary (400)		
Low Intermediate (500)		
	<b>University Preparation Courses</b>	<b>TOEFL Track</b>
Intermediate (600)	Speaking, Listening & Pronunciation Reading, Writing & Grammar	<b>Not offered at this level</b>
High Intermediate (700)	Speaking, Listening & Pronunciation Reading, Writing & Grammar	TOEFL & Academic Listening TOEFL & Academic Reading <b>(Not offered every term)</b>
Advanced (800)	<p><b>1 required course for all students:</b> Academic Writing &amp; Research Skills</p> <p><b>1 - 2 elective courses (must total 10 hours per week for full-time students)</b> Public Speaking &amp; Presentation Skills Accent Reduction Critical Thinking: News Around the World Grammar Workshop &amp; Editing English for Business Professionals IELTS Preparation</p> <p><b>(Not every class will be offered every term)</b></p>	<p>TOEFL Speaking TOEFL Writing</p> <p><b>(Not offered every term)</b></p>

**Mission Statement:**

The School of Language Studies supports the mission and philosophy of VIU by empowering its student population with the linguistic, academic, and intercultural communication skills necessary to become leaders in the global community.

**Initial Program Placement:**

All new students are required to demonstrate their level of English proficiency in order to properly place them in the right level. Students can fulfill this requirement by taking an English language proficiency test at VIU to determine appropriate placement in one of the seven levels within the program. Placement test scores determine level placement. (See the table below.) The placement test can be taken only once per term. Continuing students who wish to retake the placement test must retake the test before the new term begins.

<b>Academic:</b> 90-100%
<b>Advanced (800):</b> 85-89%
<b>High Intermediate (700):</b> 80-84%
<b>Intermediate (600):</b> 70-79%
<b>Low Intermediate (500):</b> 60-69%
<b>Elementary (400):</b> 50-59%
<b>Beginner (300):</b> 40-49%
<b>Low Beginner (200):</b> Below 40%

**Program Advancement, Completion, and Placement:**

ESL courses are non-credit-bearing courses. All ESL courses are graded on a pass/fail basis. An average score of 75.00% and missing no more than 3 classes (90% attendance) are required to pass an ESL class.

Full-time students who pass all their ESL core courses (Levels 0200-0700) receive a certificate of level completion and advance to the next level. Full-time 0800 students who pass 140 hours of the 0800-level courses including ESL 0806, and earn a score of 80 or higher on the exit test receive a certificate of program completion. For students who score lower than 80 on the exit test, it may be taken one additional time for a fee of \$30 (Exit Test Fee). The program completion certificate serves as evidence of sufficient English proficiency for admission to VIU's degree programs.

Students who do not pass required courses (all core classes for 0200-0700; 140 hours of elective courses in 0800) in a given term have the option of retaking the placement test at the end of the term for advanced placement in a higher level.

## Important Dates every Term:

First day of term (2017):	Wednesday July 5 <sup>th</sup> (Summer II 2017) Monday August 28 <sup>th</sup> (Fall I 2017) Monday October 23 <sup>rd</sup> (Fall II 2017)
Last day to change your schedule:	Monday of Week Two at 3 p.m.
Exit tests (ONLY for Level 800):	Tuesday / Wednesday of Week Six
Final exams:	Wednesday / Thursday of Week Seven
Last day of the term:	Thursday, August 17 <sup>th</sup> (Summer II 2017) Thursday, October 12 <sup>th</sup> (Fall I 2017) Thursday, December 14 <sup>th</sup> (Fall II 2017)
Final grades available:	Monday following "Last day of the term" at 5 p.m.

## ESL Program Policies:

### A. Attendance:

Our Intensive English Program's attendance policy requires all students to attend their scheduled classes and to arrive to class on time. Missing more than three classes (excused and / or unexcused) that meet 70 hours per term or two classes that meet 35 hours per term may result in losing your visa status. VIU maintains meticulous attendance records and will cancel students' I-20s if they cannot maintain their visa status. Furthermore, low attendance will have a negative effect on a student's grades and may result in a failing grade. Failing more than one course per semester means that the student may have to repeat the whole level.

In cases of absence, it is the student's responsibility to notify the course instructor prior to missing the class. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident, or emergency), the student must provide notification by the next class meeting after the absence. This notification should include an explanation of why a notice could not be sent prior to the class.

1. Some absences can be determined as "excused absence" and permit the student to make up the missed coursework without penalty.
2. There are only **three** acceptable reasons for absence from a class or lab to be "excused absence":
  1. **Serious illness or serious medical emergencies on the part of the student or a dependent.** The student must submit a doctor's note explaining the reason for the absence.
  2. **Family emergency.** The student must submit a note and supporting documents explaining the reason for their absence. In case of a death in the family, a death certificate must be submitted as supporting documents.
  3. **Legal.** The student must submit the official documentation explaining the reason for their absence.
3. To make up the excused absence coursework, the student must initiate communication with the instructor to determine the deadline and what will constitute as the makeup of the course work. The instructor must provide the student an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the final grade or provide a reasonable alternative by a date agreed upon by the student and instructor.
4. To submit an excused absence, fill out the "excused absence documentation submission form" from the red folder opposite room 232. Include any doctor's notes and all supporting documentation. Give all documents to either associate director in room 232. Do not give any documents to your teacher.
5. One unexcused absence (one class absence per session) can be made up by completing a pre-arranged two-hour session in the tutoring center. Prior arrangements must be made with your teacher and the tutoring center administrator.

6. Absences for unexcused reasons will result in not being able to make up work, quizzes, exams or other work and may negatively affect the student's final course grade.

**B. Program Length:**

If a student enters our program at ESL 0200, that student can expect the complete SLS program of study in 14 months without failing one level. Students are allowed to take each level from ESL 0200 – ESL 0700 three times, and ESL 0800 a maximum of two times. Therefore, it potentially stands that a student would require 40 months to complete the program in this unlikely scenario, not including breaks.

**C. Failing Courses:**

A full-time or part-time ESL student who fails to pass a level in the ESL program will receive an Academic Warning. The student will be placed on ESL Academic Probation if s/ he fails to pass a level in the next consecutive term. An ESL student who is on Academic Probation must pass the current level or s/ he will be dismissed and the statement "Academic Dismissal" will be entered into the student's permanent record. F-1 students will be dismissed from the program and the university will lose their F-1 visa status if they do not appeal or the result of appeal is denied by the SAP appeals committee.

Full-time students who fail one of their courses in a level must repeat the same level unless they take the placement test before the new term and score into a higher level.

**D. Appealing Level Placement:**

Students may appeal their initial placement by completing a "Level Change Request Form" from the third day of classes. This form is available in Room 232. Any student level changes are discussed by the teacher, student and administrators as well as reviewing the placement test scores and finalized by the fifth day of classes. After that day, there are no further changes to students' levels.

**E. Being on time**

- a. 10 minutes late = late arrival; 3 late arrivals = 1 absence
- b. Instructors have the right to mark student absent if the student:
  - i. is not physically present in class for more than 60 minutes per class.
  - ii. Is physically present, but not participating or being disruptive.

**F. Disruptive behavior:**

- a. Inappropriate classroom behavior includes reading non-class materials, working on an assignment for another class, using your cell phone, sleeping, being drunk, using abusive or disrespectful language toward the instructor or any other student in the class.
- b. Instructors have the right to dismiss the student from class or send the student to the Associate Director's office when his/her behavior disrupts other students' learning.

**G. Homework:**

- a. Do your homework. Every grade counts toward the final grade. In many classes, homework matters more than any tests or quizzes.
- b. Students are required to complete their homework assignments on time unless previously agreed with the instructor. Instructors do not have to accept late homework. Missing a class does not excuse you from submitting the homework. If you cannot come to school in person, the homework assignment must be submitted electronically.
- c. All homework must be **your own work** unless instructed otherwise by the instructor. Copying

from your friend or the Internet is considered cheating and will result in a **zero** grade for the assignment.

**H. Essential campus tools:**

- a. Campus email: All new students are given a VIU email address when they register for courses. Students are responsible for checking their webmail accounts every day and the information that is communicated via email.
- b. Student Portal: This is where you can check your grade or pay tuition online.
- c. eCampus: Many instructors upload lectures or handouts on eCampus.

**Advice from the Associate Directors:**

1. **LIKE** VIU ESL on Facebook. ([www.facebook.com/viuesl](http://www.facebook.com/viuesl)). We post about English tips and American culture every week.
2. **READ** the syllabus of every course. Every teacher has different rules and expectations. It is your responsibility to understand the expectations and to ask questions when they are not clear.
3. **SPEAK** up in class. You can't improve your speaking unless you practice speaking!
4. Be an **ACTIVE** learner. Ask questions. Participate in class discussions. Language cannot be taught – it can only be learned. It is your job to learn. It is our job to help.
5. Do **NOT** copy anything from the Internet or other students. If you are ever accused of plagiarism (=copying someone else's words without proper acknowledgement), you may fail the class and be dismissed from the university. Submitting the same homework assignment to two different instructors is also considered plagiarism. (Yes, even though it's your own work.)
6. **COMMUNICATE** with your teachers. Does your teacher talk too fast? Too slow? Too much homework or too little homework? Does your teacher challenge you enough? How can he or she help you succeed in class? If you don't communicate with your teachers, they don't know what you are thinking. In American universities, students are expected to be in charge of their own learning. It is not considered disrespectful to express your suggestions to your teachers. It is very much appreciated!
7. **TALK** to the ESL staff. We want to get to know you and answer your questions. We are here for you.

<b>ESL Staff Directory</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Email address</b>	<b>Phone #</b>
Patrick Moss	Associate Director, School of Language Studies	<a href="mailto:pmoss@viu.edu">pmoss@viu.edu</a>	(703) 591-7042 ext. 384
Claire Gimble	Associate Director, Non-Intensive ESL	<a href="mailto:claire@viu.edu">claire@viu.edu</a>	(703) 591-7042 ext. 324
Glen Habbershaw	ESL Full-time faculty	<a href="mailto:ghabbershaw@viu.edu">ghabbershaw@viu.edu</a>	(703) 591-7042 ext. 363

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

We offer cultural activities during the term and have an outside field trip once per term.

Recent cultural activities have included pumpkin carving, cookie decorating, and a pot luck.





Recent outside field trips have included visits to Burke Lake and the Washington Mall.



## STUDENT SERVICES

- a) **International Student Services Office** – Located on the first floor. Please see them before taking any trip and to obtain travel authorization. Their walk-in hours are Monday through Friday from 11:30 am to 12:30 am and from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. You can email them also: [dso@viu.edu](mailto:dso@viu.edu)
- b) **Career Center** – Located on the third floor. They provide guidance and academic resources to assist students and alumni to develop skills need to obtain academic internships, employment, and volunteer opportunities. They also provide resume and cover letter reviews and have a CSM online job search tool. Their hours are Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. Email them at [career@viu.edu](mailto:career@viu.edu) to schedule an appointment.
- c) **Health Insurance** – Health insurance is not mandatory for international students enrolled at VIU. However, we do highly encourage students to have some type of medical coverage. Some student health insurance options are available on the VIU website: <http://www.viu.edu/students/student-affairs/health-insurance.html>  
If you have any questions, please contact Student Affairs at [studentaffairs@campus.viu.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@campus.viu.edu) or contact Allison Forbes, Associate Director of Student Affairs, at 703-591-042, ext. 367.
- d) **Student Clubs** – Student clubs encourage students to participate, lead, and learn. At VIU, student clubs are open to all students irrespective of their program of study, nationality, or beliefs. A full listing of clubs is found at <http://www.viu.edu/students/student-affairs/student-clubs.html>
- e) **Library** – Located on the second floor. They have many books and resources to assist you in learning English or later in your degree programs. Their hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am to 9 pm. They are open Friday from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm and on Saturday from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm. Their website is <http://library.viu.edu/Home>
- f) **Writing, Research, and Media Center** – Located on the third floor. They offer services in writing strategies, formatting, Microsoft Office resources, research methods, and student learning modules for both residential and online students. Please visit them at <http://www.viu.edu/wrmc> to schedule an appointment
- g) **Student discounts** – Visit the website <http://www.viu.edu/students/student-affairs/student-discounts.html> to see places where you can get a discount by showing your student ID.
- h) **Counseling services** – These services are open to all students. If you are struggling with feeling homesick, depressed, anxious, stressed, need advice or someone who will listen to you, please come by during the open counseling hours or make an appointment. Visit the website <http://www.viu.edu/students/student-affairs/counseling-services.html> to see the open hours. All information shared during the session is kept confidential. If you would like to make an appointment, email [counseling@viu.edu](mailto:counseling@viu.edu)
- i) **ESL Tutoring Service** – To make an appointment, email [esltutoring@campus.viu.edu](mailto:esltutoring@campus.viu.edu). Tutoring is on a first come, first serve basis. Make sure to bring your materials with you. Free ESL tutoring is offered from Monday to Thursday from 3 pm to 4 pm and on Fridays by appointment.

## ESL FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions):

1. I am not satisfied with my placement test score. Can I take it again?
  - Not if you have taken it for this term. You are allowed to take the placement test ONCE per term.
2. Can I pay my tuition online?
  - If you are a **new** student, you cannot register for your courses or pay your tuition online.
  - If you are **continuing** student, you will be able to register by emailing your academic advisor and pay the tuition online once the registration is done.
3. I cannot attend a class. What should I do?
  - If you are not feeling well and would like your absence to be excused, please go see a doctor and get a doctor's note. The doctor's note MUST be submitted to the Associate Director of SLS (Patrick Moss) or Associate Director of Non-Intensive ESL (Claire Gimble) **within TWO weeks** of your absence. (NOTE: A doctor's note that has multiple, non-consecutive dates will NOT be accepted.)
  - Email all your instructors and inform them of your absence. (NOTE: This does NOT mean your absence will be excused.)
  - Pay attention to the email you receive from the register's office notifying you of your total absences for the term. If you think the information is incorrect, notify your teacher or the associate directors in room 232.
4. What does excused absence mean?
  - It means your instructors will allow you to make up your missed work that was due on the day of your absence. In other words, you may submit your late homework or take the quiz you missed.
5. I was sick, but didn't go see a doctor. I just wanted to rest at home and take medicine that I brought from my home country. Can my absence be excused?
  - Unfortunately, we cannot excuse your absence UNLESS you can provide us with a doctor's note.
6. Am I graded on attendance?
  - Students are not graded on participation, effort, nor attendance. However, being counted absent for the day may affect either a student's course grade and / or visa status. Attending 90% or more of your classes greatly increases your chances of making significant progress in that term.
7. Why are my grades S/U, not A-F?
  - VIU ESL is a non-credit program and have a Pass/Fail grading system. **S** means Satisfactory, which means Pass (75% or higher). **U** means Unsatisfactory, which means Fail.
8. How can I go to the next level and get a certificate for the level I just completed?
  - Level 200-700 students must pass **BOTH** core courses to advance to the next level.
  - Level 800 students must pass at least 140 hours of the 0800-level courses including ESL 0806 **AND** take the program exit test to receive a program completion certificate.
  - F1 students (international full-time students) who pass the above-mentioned number of courses will receive a certificate of completion for the term.
  - F2 students cannot get a certificate even if they pass enough courses for the level.
9. I passed all my courses! When can I get my certificate?
  - It takes about a month after the term for all the departments (Registrar's Office, Accounting, Library, ESL, etc.) to clear you. When your certificate is ready for pick-up, you will get an email at your VIU email account. They can be picked up at the Registrar's Office.
  - If you are no longer in the U.S., you can request a scanned copy of your certificate (free), ask a friend or a family member to pick it up (free), or have it mailed to you (\$\$).



10. I am in Level 500. Can I take TOEFL classes?
  - We currently offer intensive TOEFL courses to students in Level 700 or 800 only. Students benefit most from TOEFL classes when they have high English proficiency.
11. I am in Level 800. What happens if I don't take the exit test?
  - You will NOT be able to get your program completion certificate. This serves as evidence of sufficient English proficiency for admission to VIU's degree programs.
12. If I do poorly on the exit test, does it mean I cannot get into my academic program?
  - Perhaps. Students who earn a score of 80 or higher on exit test receive a certificate of program completion. For students who score lower than 80 on the exit test, it may be taken one additional time for a fee of \$50 (Exit Test Fee). The program completion certificate serves as evidence of sufficient English proficiency for admission to VIU's degree programs.
13. Do I have to take TOEFL to get into the academic program?
  - No. As long as you successfully complete VIU's ESL program, you will be automatically admitted to one of VIU's academic programs when you score 80 or higher on the exit test and receive your certificate of program completion without having to submit a TOEFL or IELTS score.
14. I have complaints about my teacher/classmate. Who should I talk to?
  - Most complaints are the result of misunderstandings. Talk to your teacher/classmate first. See if you can solve the problem together by agreeing on a solution. If that does not work, consult Patrick (SLS Associate Director, SLS) or Claire (Associate Director, Non-intensive ESL). We will be more than happy to help.
15. I am going out of the country. Who should I talk to?
  - Talk to your Academic Advisor and the DSO BEFORE you make any travel plans. Do NOT buy plane tickets until you check your travel eligibility with us. You may not be allowed to take a break from the program.
16. When can I take a time off from my study?
  - Full-time ESL students may be eligible to take time off: Annual Break or Grace Period.
    - a. **Annual Break** is for students who took 4 consecutive terms of ESL classes and wish to continue with the ESL program after the break. To apply for this break, you need to submit the Annual Break Request Form and get an official approval email from DSO.
    - b. **Grace Period** is only given to ESL completers, or students who have successfully completed Level 0800 and do not wish to continue with the ESL program. ESL completers may use this 60-day grace period to complete the paperwork for their academic studies. Please contact DSO for more details at [dso@viu.edu](mailto:dso@viu.edu)
17. I'm overwhelmed by all the assignments! Can I take less than 20 hours of ESL per week?
  - If you are an F1-visa student, you MUST take 20 hours of ESL per week to maintain your status.
  - If you have another type of visa or you are a US resident, you do not have to be a full-time student.
18. I like challenging myself. Can I take more than 20 hours of ESL per week?
  - It is not encouraged due to heavy workload. However, if you feel strongly about taking additional ESL courses, you may request it by submitting Course Overload Request Form, which needs to be signed by the Director. The form can be found on VIU's website.
19. How can I improve my English?
  - There are no shortcuts to language learning! Watch TED videos, American movies, and TV shows. Listen to radio programs such as NPR, BBC, and VoA. Speak English with your friends and classmates, even if you speak the same first language! Check out local events and start making small talk with native speakers. Also, you should sign up for our **free tutoring service** we offer students.