Establishing TOEFL iBT Test Score Requirements for Entrance to Universities

Susan Nissan

snissan@ets.org

Educational Testing Service

April 12, 2011

ETS TOEFL

Go Anywhere From Here.

Outline

Overview of the test

Definition of standard setting

The dilemma

Standard setting methodologies

Sample judgments

Additional considerations

Go Anywhere From Here.

Overview of the TOEFL iBT test

- Four sections:
  - Reading
  - Listening
  - 10 minute break
  - Speaking
  - Writing
- Test time: 4.0 hours
- Note taking allowed throughout the test

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT Reading

- 3 - 5 reading passages from academic texts
  - Reading passages approximately 700 words long
  - 12 to 14 questions about each reading passage
- Purposes of reading:

  - Reading for information

  - Reading to Learn (by categorizing information by filling in chart or completing a summary or by Paraphrasing)
- Glossary feature
- Review feature – helps test taker to track questions not answered

ETS TOEFL.

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT Listening

- 4 - 6 lectures; some with classroom discussion
  - About 5 minutes each
  - Each has 6 questions
- 2 - 3 conversations
  - About 3 minutes each
  - Each has 5 questions
- Questions measure:
  - Basic understanding
  - Connecting information
  - Pragmatic understanding

ETS TOEFL.

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT Speaking

- 2 independent tasks about familiar topics
  - Responses based on personal experience
- 4 integrated tasks
  - 2 Reading/Listening/Speaking tasks
  - 2 Listening/Speaking tasks
  - Responses based on what was read and heard – must include accurate content for highest score
  - Academic and campus-based material
  - Short listening and reading material

TOEFL

Go Anywhere From Here.

- Each task is rated by a trained rater on a scale of 0 – 4. Responses are rated on topic development, delivery, and language use.

- The scores for the 6 tasks are then converted to a scaled score of 0 – 30.

- ETS-trained raters evaluate responses via ETS Online Scoring Network, re-calibrate before each rating session.

ETS TOEFL.

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT Writing

- 1 integrated task: Reading-Listening-Writing
  - Short academic listening and reading material
  - Response based on what was read and heard, must include accurate content for highest score
- 1 independent task
  - Response based on personal experience

Go Anywhere From Here.

Sample Integrated Writing task

Title | Question | Time | Test-Mode Tools | Testing Tools
Help | Section Exit | Next | Volume | Help | Next

In many organizations, perhaps the best way to approach certain new projects is to assemble a group of people into a team. Having a team of people attack a project offers several advantages. First of all, a group of people has a wider range of knowledge, expertise, and skills than any single individual is likely to possess. Also, because of the numbers of people involved and the greater resources they possess, a group can work more quickly in response to the task assigned to it and can come up with highly creative solutions to problems and issues. Sometimes these creative solutions come about because a group is more likely to make risky decisions that an individual might not undertake. This is because the group spreads responsibility for a decision to all the members and thus no single individual can be held accountable if the decision turns out to be wrong.

Taking part in a group process can be very rewarding for members of the team. Team members who have a voice in making a decision will no doubt feel better about carrying out the work that is entailed by that decision than they might doing work that is imposed on them by others. Also, the individual team member has a much better chance to "shine," to get his or her contributions and ideas not only recognized but recognized as highly significant, because a team's overall results can be more far-reaching and have greater impact than what might have otherwise been possible for the person to accomplish or contribute working alone.

9

Sample Integrated Writing task

Sample Integrated Writing task

Directions: You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response will be judged on the basis of the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words.

Question: Summarize the points made in the lecture you just heard, explaining how they cast doubt on points made in the reading.

In many organizations, perhaps the best way to approach certain new projects is to assemble a group of people into a team. Having a team of people attack a project offers several advantages. First of all, a group of people has a wider range of knowledge, expertise, and skills than any single individual is likely to possess. Also, because of the numbers of people involved and the greater resources they possess, a group can work more quickly in response to the task assigned to it and can come up with highly creative solutions to problems and issues. Sometimes these creative solutions come about because a group is more likely to make risky decisions that an individual might not undertake. This is because the group spreads responsibility for a decision to all the members and thus no single individual can be held accountable if the decision turns out to be wrong.

Taking part in a group process can be very rewarding for members of the team. Team members who have a voice in making a decision will no doubt feel better about carrying out the work that is entailed by that decision than they might doing work that is imposed on them by others. Also, the individual team member has a much better chance to "shine," to get his or her contributions and ideas not only recognized but recognized as highly significant, because a team's overall results can be more far-reaching and have greater impact than what might have otherwise been possible for the person to accomplish or contribute working alone.

Cut | Paste | Undo | Hide | WordCount | 4

I think that ....

11

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT Writing Section - Rating and Scores

- Scoring guidelines for Independent writing task
  - Development of ideas
  - Organization
  - Quality and accuracy of language used
- Guidelines for Integrated writing task
  - Quality of writing
  - Completeness and accuracy of response
- ETS-trained human raters evaluate responses via ETS Online Scoring Network
- Ratings are 0 - 5
  - Then converted to a scaled score of 0 – 30

Go Anywhere From Here.

TOEFL iBT score reports

Universities receive:

- Four skill scores
  - Reading   0 - 30
  - Listening   0 - 30
  - Speaking   0 - 30
  - Writing   0 - 30
- A total score: 0 – 120

Students receive a total score, section scores, and performance descriptors.

Go Anywhere From Here.

Importance of section scores

Which student with a total score of 80 has sufficient language proficiency to succeed at your university?

	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking	Total
Student 1	17	20	24	19	80
Student 2	20	20	20	20	80
Student 3	25	25	16	14	80

Consider the use of section scores as well as the total score!

Go Anywhere From Here.

Standard setting - Definition

Standard setting is a procedure for determining a recommended score for a specific purpose.

Also referred to as a cut score, score requirement, performance standard.

Standard setting:

· Is a judgment process

· Relies on the concept of a student with minimally acceptable skills (not a student with *average* skills)

· Focuses on a student for whom English is not a first language but whose English proficiency is *good enough* to cope in academia

The dilemma

How high to set the score requirement?

- If the score requirement is too high:

    International students may need to go elsewhere for their studies and not to your university.

- If the score requirement is too low:

    International students who do not have sufficient language proficiency to succeed will be accepted.

ETS. **TOEFL**.

Go Anywhere From Here.

Methodology

- Modified Angoff method: relies on concept of a minimally able examinee

- For Speaking and Writing: Decide whether a test taker's responses meet those criteria of acceptable performance

- For Listening and Reading: Decide whether a person who has that defined level of minimal ability will answer each item correctly

Go Anywhere From Here.

Panel members

- Panelists need to be:
  - Familiar with the NNS population at the institution
  - Familiar with target language tasks
  - Familiar with ESL, at least some panelists

- Typically, a panel has 12-20 participants, including
  - University professors from a variety of disciplines
  - University administrators (eg, admissions staff, international student advisors)
  - ESL instructors

Overview of process for Writing (and Speaking)

- Define language tasks of first year students

    E.g., writing assigned papers, synthesize information from multiple sources

- Define the minimally acceptable language user and skills

    - Describe strong writer and weak writer, and use those descriptions to come up with minimally acceptable writer
    - Panel needs to reach consensus about the definition of a minimally accepter writer

Go Anywhere From Here.

Sample description of minimal Speaking ability *

- Accent doesn't hinder communication
- Appropriate use of vocabulary, but not without some errors
- Has some flow, connected dialogue
- Has semblance of organization
- May mix formal and informal speech but meaning is clear
- Reasonable pace

* From university panel, not ETS standards

Go Anywhere From Here.

Sample description of minimal Writing ability *

- Organized and logical, with clear evidence of chunking of ideas
- Generally cohesive, though some sentences may be choppy
- Register is generally appropriate for written discourse
- Uses mostly accurate vocabulary (meaning is clear, not distorted)
- Uses mostly accurate grammar (grammatical errors do not distort meaning)

* From university panel, not ETS standards

Continued:

- Become familiar with the assessment tasks and the scoring guidelines
  - Two writing tasks
  - Scoring guidelines for independent task and for integrated task

Go Anywhere From Here.

Scoring guidelines for Integrated task at Level 5

- A response at this level successfully selects the important information from the lecture and coherently and accurately presents this information in relation to the relevant information presented in the reading. The response is well organized, and occasional language errors that are present do not result in inaccurate or imprecise presentation of content or connections.

Scoring guidelines for Integrated task at Level 3

A response at this level contains some important information from the lecture and conveys some relevant connection to the reading, but it is marked by one or more of the following:

- Although the overall response is definitely oriented to the task, it conveys only vague, global, unclear, or somewhat imprecise connection of the points made in the lecture to points made in the reading.
- The response may omit one major key point made in the lecture.
- Some key points made in the lecture or the reading, or connections between the two, may be incomplete, inaccurate, or imprecise.
- Errors of usage and/or grammar may be more frequent or may result in noticeably vague expressions or obscured meanings in conveying ideas and connections.

Continued:

- Practice making judgments, by answering this question about a student's responses:

"Has this student demonstrated the minimally acceptable writing skills adequate for first-year studies at our university?"

Continued:

· Each panelist reads student responses to both writing tasks and individually makes Round 1 judgments for each student. Each judgment is based on this question:

"Has this student demonstrated the minimally   acceptable writing skills adequate for first-year   studies at our university?"

· Discuss Round 1 judgments, entire panel

· Make Round 2 judgments, individually

Overview of process for Reading and Listening

- Begin with definition of minimally able student, with just enough language skills to succeed at university

- Become familiar with the test tasks

- Each panelist decides, for each test item, whether a student with minimally acceptable proficiency will answer the correctly.

- Discussion of initial judgements, then round 2.

TOEFL

Go Anywhere From Here.

Final recommendation for score requirements

Other information that informs decision:

- Percentile data (based on 2009 testing year)

http://www.ets.org/research/policy_research_reports/toefl-sur

TOEFL Score	Percentile (2009 data)
80	45
100	81

- Score requirements of similar institutions

Go Anywhere From Here.

Questions?

Thank you for attending…