

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Within the Bachelor of Arts, St. Thomas offers a unique English as a Second Language (ESL) program for students whose level of English proficiency is not high enough to pursue regular studies at an English-language university. These students are provided the opportunity to begin university studies for credit while they continue to improve their language skills in a planned, individualized program of study.

To be eligible for this program, ESL students must have TOEFL (computer-based) scores of between 173 and 230 or the equivalent on other tests. A combination of ESL courses and adapted courses in other disciplines enables students to achieve the level of proficiency in English necessary to be successful in regular university studies. All of the courses that students take in the ESL program carry academic credit.

A personal approach guides the ESL curriculum. Every student who has not yet fully mastered English is tested through an oral interview, a vocabulary and grammar test, and an essay assignment. Based on the results of these tests, an individualized curriculum is developed for each student suitable for his or her level. The curriculum will be challenging, but not overwhelming. It will be based on four options:

ESL Courses for Academic Credit

These required courses focus on the major skills needed for success in academic studies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ESL program has a graduated sequence of courses that eligible students must complete from their entry level. Students admitted to ESL 1013 upon their arrival will usually take six ESL courses over two years, while students admitted to ESL 2213 will take two courses in one year.

Integrated Courses

These are sections of regular St. Thomas University courses (such as Introduction to Psychology and Literature) reserved for ESL students. They are taught by professors who meet with the class for an extra hour each week so that they can present the material more slowly and take extra care to ensure that the students understand the material.

Assisted Courses

These regular St. Thomas University courses are open to all students but ESL students are provided with a tutor who meets with them to review the material presented in class, to help understand the readings, and to assist with assignments and exam preparations.

Regular Courses

These are the regular course offerings for all St. Thomas University students. Hundreds of courses in more than 25 different academic fields of study are available for first-year students each semester.

The first-year curriculum for students who attain an intermediate level in their English language skills evaluation includes:

Semester 1

ESL 1013 English for Academic Purposes: Reading and Writing I

ESL 1033 English for Academic Purposes: Speaking and Listening I

Two Integrated Courses

One Assisted Course (optional)

Semester 2

ESL 1023 English for Academic Purposes: Reading and Writing II

ESL 1043 English for Academic Purposes: Speaking and Listening II

One Integrated Course

Two Assisted Courses (optional)

Intersession and Summer Session

Some full-time ESL students may be best served by taking fewer than five courses per semester, which is the normal full-time course load. The university therefore permits ESL students who are directed to take fewer than five courses to make up those credits at Intersession (May-June) or Summer Session (July-August) free of charge.

Admission Requirements

Students who meet the following minimum English Language Proficiency scores and the St. Thomas academic admission requirements are eligible for the ESL program: TOEFL: 61 (Internet-based), TOEFL: 173 (computer-based), TOEFL: 500 (paper-based), MELAB: 69, IELTS: 5.0.

Students with TOEFL scores of 88-89 (Internet-based), 230 (computer-based), 570 (paper-based) or a MELAB score of 80 or an IELTS score of 6.5 or greater are eligible to take five regular academic courses but may take integrated and assisted courses if they wish.

Regulations

1. The ESL program has a graduated sequence of courses that eligible students are required to complete from their entry level. For example, students admitted to ESL 1013 upon their arrival will usually take six ESL courses over two years, while students admitted to ESL 2213 will take two courses in one year.
2. Students who want to leave the program before they have completed it must convince the Director that they have the required English language skills by achieving a grade of A- on their last ESL course and one of the following scores on an external test: 60 on CAEL; 230 on TOEFL (computer-based) or 88 on TOEFL:BT. The CAEL test is available at Saint John College at UNB-Saint John, NB and TOEFL tests are available in Sackville, NB and Halifax, NS. Students must arrange and pay for these tests themselves.
3. Students must successfully pass the first-year courses before moving on. A student who fails the first-year courses twice is excluded from the ESL program. These students would be eligible to reapply to St. Thomas University when they can demonstrate that their English language skills are stronger.
4. Students taking courses in the ESL program are restricted to a total of 15 credit hours per semester. In exceptional cases, the Director may permit a student to exceed this course load.

5. The pedagogical strategies used in language courses require active participation from students. Attendance is obligatory in the ESL courses. A student who misses over 10% of an ESL course without a justifiable reason will be dismissed from the program.

ESL Courses

ESL-1013. English for Academic Purposes: Reading and Writing I

This course helps students whose first language is not English develop the reading and writing skills required in university studies. The reading techniques to be taught will include skimming, previewing, predicting and in-depth analyzing. The types of writing practiced will be summaries, paraphrases and essays (expository, and comparison and contrast). Vocabulary-building and grammar will also be important components of the course. Co-requisite: ESL 1033.

ESL-1023. English for Academic Purposes: Reading and Writing II

This course will help students whose first language is not English further develop academic reading and writing skills. The reading techniques to be improved will include skimming, previewing, predicting and in-depth analyzing. The types of writing practiced will be summaries, paraphrases and essays (cause and effect, and persuasive). Vocabulary-building and grammar will also be important components of the course. Students will also develop their ability to conduct library-based research and to synthesize information for writing assignments. Prerequisite: ESL 1013 or Director's permission. Co-requisite: ESL 1043.

ESL-1033. English for Academic Purposes: Speaking and Listening I

This course helps students whose first language is not English to develop the speaking and listening skills required in university studies. The basic elements of oral expression and comprehension will be studied: sounds, word and sentence stress, rhythm, intonation, comprehension of weak forms, and connected speech. Listening skills will include intensive, selective and interactive tasks, such as note-taking. Speaking functions will include presenting information, asking questions and debating. 6 hours per week. Co-requisite: ESL 1013.

ESL-1043. English for Academic Purposes: Speaking and Listening II

This course helps students whose first language is not English to develop the speaking and listening skills required in university studies. The basic elements of oral expression and comprehension will be studied: sounds, word and sentence stress, rhythm, intonation, comprehension of weak forms, and connected speech. Listening skills will include intensive, selective and interactive tasks, such as note-taking. Speaking functions will include presenting information, asking questions and debating. 6 hours per week. Prerequisite: ESL 1033 or Director's permission. Co-requisite: ESL 1023.

ESL-2213. Advanced English for Academic Purposes I

This course is designed to assist ESL students in meeting the language-related expectations of university courses. The primary focus will be on academic writing skills. Attention will also be devoted to listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and vocabulary acquisition. Language skills will be linked to academic content from a number of disciplines. The course is intended for students whose first language is not English and whose TOEFL scores are between 550 and 599 (or a recognized equivalent). Prerequisite: ESL 1023 or Director's permission.

ESL-2223. Advanced English for Academic Purposes II

This course is designed to assist ESL students in further developing their ability to meet the language-related expectations of university courses. The emphasis will be on refining writing skills. Attention will also be devoted to listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and vocabulary acquisition. Students will explore how the various language skills are interconnected in the university context. The course is intended for students whose first language is not English and whose TOEFL scores are between 550 and 599 (or a recognized equivalent). Prerequisite: ESL 2213 or Director's permission.

Integrated Courses

ENGL-1013. Introduction to Literature for International Students (ESL)

An introduction for international students to a representative sampling of fiction and poetry written in English. The course will concentrate on the acquisition of close reading skills and expository writing skills. It will also be an exploration of some of the key themes of western literature. Open only to ESL students.

ESL-1053. Topics in Canadian Studies for ESL Students: Maritime Society

Students will learn the salient points of the geography, history, government, economics and social makeup of the Maritimes. The contributions and struggles of diverse groups living in the region will be examined, including First Nations, Acadians, English, Irish, Scottish and multicultural communities. In this interdisciplinary course, students will gain insight into the issues, problems and debates that inform Maritime society. They will also analyze the perceived status of the Maritimes within Canada and trends in the migration of Maritimers across the country.

ESL-1063. Topics in Canadian Studies for ESL Students: Maritime Arts and Culture

Students will read a representative selection, in the original English or in translation, of short stories, poems and excerpts from novels and plays from major voices of the Maritimes, including First Nations, Acadians, Anglophones and multicultural communities. Challenges posed by writing and translating regional dialects and the languages of other groups will be examined. Students will also study films, visual art and music. They will investigate the category of identity and the tensions between regional/national and inclusion/exclusion within the production of Maritime culture.

ESL-1073. Academic Coursework

This course adopts an integrated-skills approach to English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and addresses elements of EAP across all four major skill areas – reading, writing, listening and speaking. The course is designed to provide additional support and augment instruction for students who require re-enforcement of key EAP subject areas.

NOTE: Not all courses listed are offered each year. Please consult with the Program Director for more information about current and planned course offerings.