UMSL is proud of its diverse student population. With over 1000 students representing 100 countries, our international students enrich the academic experience of all at UMSL with their various backgrounds and perspectives. During their first semesters, however, new international students will require some adjustment to the new language, culture and academic system. To assist this transition, UMSL offers supplementary classes in English as a Second Language (ESL).

When international students arrive for Orientation Week, they take the ESL Proficiency Exam to determine whether they would benefit from or need to take a course for academic language support. Results are recommended, required or exempt and are sent by email and/or posted on the Academic Advisors MyGateway site. Exchange students may enroll in any classes they want, but should take English skills needed for other classes. Permanent residents are not required to take the ESL Diagnostic Exam, but may do so at no charge.

ESL courses are offered at intermediate levels in Reading and Writing, Grammar and Communicative Structure, Academic Listening and Test-taking, and Oral Communication. There are advanced courses in Writing Research Papers and a Seminar for International Teaching Assistants. Three 4000-level classes will count toward the graduation requirement in the Colleges of Business, Arts and Sciences and of Fine Arts and Communication. International students may seek exemption from the foreign language requirement.

ESL Classes Help International Students
- Improve their active English language skills
- Gain confidence
- Ease the cultural and academic transition to the American university
- Meet other international students
- Improve academic success and grades in other courses

ESL Classes
- Are for course credit and include grades that affect the grade point average
- Are taken concurrently with mainstream classes and must be completed the first year
- Are limited to 15 students or fewer
- Are taught by qualified, experienced instructors who possess graduate degrees in TESOL.

If you have an international student who is struggling in your course, seek to meet with him or her individually in your office. Often, international students are reluctant to ask questions or offer comments during class due to cultural differences in classroom expectations or they may feel awkward about their language skills. Please contact the ESL Coordinator about a concern.
Other campus resources that help international students succeed include
  • The ESL tutor in the Foreign Language Resource Center in 555 Clark Hall.
  • The Writing Lab in 222 SSB.
  • Free Study Seminars and individual counseling at the Center for Academic Success
  • Various student groups such as the Conversation Club and the Chinese-American corner.