

Information about The Regents' GSTEP

Test dates

Go to <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwtep/dates/index.html>

Students who are non-native speakers of English may take the Regents' GSTEP instead of the regular Regents'. The definition of "non-native Speaker" is someone whose first language is not English, regardless of citizenship or visa.

Regents' GSTEP

Department of Applied Linguistics & ESL
Georgia State University

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A. General Guidelines

Eligibility

Students who are non-native speakers of English may take the Regents' GSTEP instead of the regular Regents'. The definition of "non-native speaker" is someone whose first language is not English, regardless of citizenship or visa status.

Limitations

Students can take the Regents' GSTEP once a semester. They cannot take the regular Regents' and the Regents' GSTEP in the same semester.

Registration Process

- **Students register in person in the Applied Linguistics/ESL Department, 12th floor, 34 Peachtree Street (404-413-5200).**
- No form or special permission is needed to register.
- There is no charge for the Regents' GSTEP.
- **Students should register as early as possible.** The deadline is two (2) days before the test date.
- Students who need to take both sections of the test (reading and writing) must take them both at the same time. However, if a student has passed one section but not the other, he/she may take just one section.
- Students must sign a statement on the registration form, indicating that they are non-native speakers of English.
- Students must present a photo ID for the test.

Test Format

The test consists of three (3) parts:

Part 1. Multiple choice reading (45 minutes)

Three (3) reading passages with 10 multiple choice questions for each passage (for a total of 30 multiple choice questions)

Part 2. Short answer reading and writing (45 minutes)

Two (2) reading passages on a single theme with 8 short answer questions

Part 3. Essay (45 minutes)

One (1) essay topic based on the second group of passages

If students need to take only the reading portions, they will take Parts 1 and 2. If they need to take only the writing portions, they will take Parts 2 and 3. No matter what part(s) of the test they are taking, they must arrive by the start time of the test.

Time Allotment

The entire GSTEP is approximately 2-1/2 hours. For students taking only the reading sections or only the writing sections, the test is 1-1/2 hours. All students must arrive for the test at the scheduled beginning time. An example clock schedule follows:

	12:30	1:15	2:00	2:45
Reading	MC	Short Answer	End of Test	
Writing	Short Answer	Essay	End of Test	
Both	MC	Short Answer	Essay	End of Test

Extended Time

Non-native speaking students are not granted extended time on the basis of language alone. If a student has a learning disability, s/he can request extended time with permission from the Office of Disability Services, 230 Student Center (404-413-1560).

Test Materials

Test booklets, answer sheets, and No. 2 pencils will be provided to students. Students must use a No. 2 pencil for the multiple-choice section. They may use a dark pencil or a blue or black pen for the other sections.

Dictionary Use

Students are permitted to use a dictionary on Parts 2 and 3 of the test only (not on Part 1, the multiple choice reading section). An English-English or translation dictionary is permitted. Electronic dictionaries or translators are not allowed.

General Things to Remember

- Students should arrive on time for the test.
- Students should bring a photo ID, blue or black pens, and No. 2 pencils to the testing location.
- Students should check with the Registrar (One Stop Shop, 404-413-2600) if they are not sure they need to take the test. Students should receive a letter reminding them of the test, but if they do not receive a letter, it is still their responsibility to take the test.
- To verify test dates and location, students should check with the Testing Office for the regular Regents' (Counseling Center, 75 Piedmont Ave, 404-413-1640) and the Applied Linguistics/ESL Department for the Regents' GSTEP (12th floor, 34 Peachtree Street, 404-413-5200). Periodically, testing dates will change or be added from what is published in the *Schedule of Classes* each semester.

B. Guidelines for the Reading Portions of the Regents' GSTEP**Overview**

1. Students requiring the reading portions of the test complete Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 consists of three (3) reading passages with 10 multiple choice questions for each passage, for a total of 30 questions. Students have 45 minutes to complete this section. Part 2 consists of two (2) reading passages on a single theme with 8 short answer questions. Students have 45 minutes to complete this section.

Part 1. Multiple-Choice Section

1. Students are first given a test booklet and an answer sheet for their multiple choice responses. Students may not underline or write notes in the test booklet. All answers must be recorded on the computer answer sheet. They should not make stray marks on the computer answer sheet. If they decide to change an answer in the multiple choice section (which is not recommended unless they are absolutely sure of the change), they should erase the answer completely so that the final answer is not confusing or counted wrong.
2. The reading passages for Part 1 are 300-500 words in length and are drawn from introductory college textbooks and general interest publications (e.g., *Newsweek*, *Scientific American*.) The passages vary in subject matter, and within each form of the test there is a balance among humanities, social science, and physical science topics. Topics that require specific cultural knowledge, such as European history or literature, are not included, because such topics are not always accessible to non-native speakers.
3. The multiple choice questions are weighted equally, so students must manage their time in order to read all three passages and answer all questions. Questions vary in type and difficulty. Because questions are weighted equally, the more difficult questions do not earn more than the less difficult ones.
4. The multiple choice questions measure the following reading skills: identifying main ideas, understanding specific information, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in context. These question types overlap substantially with, but are not exactly identical to, the question types used in the regular Regents' reading test. A typical passage will have one main idea question, two to four specific information questions, two to three inference questions, and three to four vocabulary questions. In general, the same reading strategies that apply to the regular Regents' test apply to the Regents' GSTEP and can be taught in test preparation classes.
5. Each multiple choice question has four choices, only one of which is the best answer. Students should read all four choices and be sure that the option they choose best answers the question in the item stem.
6. There is NO penalty for guessing. Students should answer all 30 items even if they must guess on some.
7. Most reading specialists recommend that students read the passage all the way through before reading the item stems for the questions. It takes more time to read the questions first, and many students find that they do not have time for this strategy. Trying to remember questions while reading the passage may hinder concentration as well.

Part 2. Short Answer Section

1. After students finish the multiple-choice section of the test, their test booklet and answer card are collected and they receive a second test booklet for the short answer section. Students write their answers to these questions in the test booklet. An English-English or translation dictionary is permitted for Part 2, the short answer section. Electronic dictionaries or translators are not allowed.

2. The two reading passages are approximately 300 words in length and are generally argumentative rather than informational in nature. Each passage presents a different perspective on the same topic. Example topics include the use of genetic engineering to improve food supplies or the importance of music and art in education.
3. Students should provide complete sentence answers to all eight questions. There are three questions on the first passage, three questions on the second passage, and two questions that require students to compare and/or contrast the content of the two passages. The questions are written in such a way that students should not be able to copy sentences directly from the text to answer them; rather, they must use their own words to answer the questions.
4. During the rating process of the short answer section, responses are read and scored independently by two (2) trained raters on a five-point holistic scale for content (see below). The 8-response short answer section is rated as a whole; that is, responses are not rated individually. The two scores given by the raters are averaged.

5	Responses demonstrate full and sophisticated understanding of both texts. All items addressed completely and accurately.
4	Responses demonstrate good understanding of both texts. Most items addressed completely and accurately, though some responses may be undeveloped.
3	Responses demonstrate minimally adequate understanding of both texts. Some responses may be brief or off-target; at most one or two items are not attempted.
2	Responses demonstrate partial misunderstanding of at least one text. Several answers may be brief and/or off-target but some responses are accurate.
1	Responses demonstrate inadequate understanding of both texts. Several items not answered or responses are off-target.

5. Students should attempt to answer every question and to write complete sentences. A single sentence is generally sufficient; it is better to have shorter answers that directly address each question than to have long answers for some items and no answers to others. Students should also be encouraged to use their own words as much as possible rather than copying directly from the text.
6. Errors in grammar will not fail a paper. Serious or repeated errors will result in a failing paper only if the raters are not able to understand the meaning of the writing.
7. The raters value neatness and legibility. They must be able to read students' handwriting. Printing is acceptable as long as distinctions between capital and lower-case letters are obvious. It is also acceptable to cross out errors and write the correction above the error. Using white-out is not recommended. Short answers can be written in dark pencil or in blue or black pen.

Scoring

1. The scores for both the multiple choice and the short answer sections are converted into band scores with the following interpretations:
 - 7 Excellent user of English. No ESL.
 - 6 Very good user of English. May benefit from advanced ESL courses in programs with intensive writing and/or speaking demands.
 - 5 Good user of English. May benefit from ESL courses concurrent with regular courses.

- 4 Fair user of English. Course program should consist primarily of ESL courses.
 - 3 Minimal user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.
 - 2 Very limited user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.
 - 1 Extremely limited user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.
2. For the multiple-choice sections, the exact cutoffs for passing results differ from one form of the test to another; however, the approximate cutoffs for both sections are found in the table below.

Band	MC (approximate)	Short Answer: Content (average of 2 ratings)
7	80%	4-5
6	70%	3-3.5
5	65%	2.5

3. Students must receive at least an **average band score of 6** (combining the multiple-choice section with the content score of the short answer section). For example, a student could get a band score of 7 on the multiple-choice items and a 5 on the short-answer items and still pass the reading portion of the Regents' GSTEP.

C. Guidelines for the Writing Portions of the Regents' GSTEP

Overview

1. Students requiring the writing portions of the test complete Parts 2 and 3. Part 2 consists of two (2) reading passages and eight (8) short answer questions. Students have 45 minutes to complete this section. Part 3 consists of one (1) essay topic based on the reading passages of Part 2. Students have 45 minutes to complete this section.
2. Students receive a test booklet for the short answer and essay sections, and they write their answers to these sections in the test booklet.
3. Students are permitted to use a dictionary on Parts 2 and 3 of the test. One (1) English-English or translation dictionary is permitted. Electronic dictionaries or translators are not allowed.

Part 2. Short Answer Section

1. The two reading passages are approximately 300 words in length and are generally argumentative rather than informational in nature. Each passage presents a different perspective on the same topic. Example topics include the use of genetic engineering to improve food supplies or the importance of music and art in education.
2. There is a total of eight questions: three questions on the first passage, three questions on the second passage, and two questions that require students to compare and/or contrast the content of the two passages.

3. The questions are written in such a way that students should not be able to copy sentences directly from the text to answer them; rather, they must use their own words to answer the questions.
4. During the rating process of the short answer section, responses are read and scored independently by two (2) trained raters on a 5-point holistic scale for language (see below). The 8-response short answer section is rated as a whole; that is, responses are not rated individually. The two scores given by the raters are averaged.

5	Responses demonstrate excellent command of English. Few errors in grammar or vocabulary; responses consist primarily of student's own words.
4	Responses demonstrate good command of English. Some errors present that do not interfere with comprehension; there may be some reliance on source text language.
3	Responses suggest minimally adequate command of English. There may be several distracting errors but responses are generally comprehensible; there may be heavy reliance on source text language.
2	Responses suggest lack of command of English. Many errors, some of which interfere with comprehension; extensive copying from source texts.
1	Responses demonstrate lack of command of English. Responses that are present are mostly incomprehensible or are copied from source texts.

5. Students should attempt to answer every question and to write complete sentences. A single sentence is generally sufficient; it is better to have shorter answers that directly address each question than to have long answers for some items and no answers to others. Students should also be encouraged to use their own words as much as possible rather than copying directly from the text. Students will be penalized for copying from the texts.
6. The raters value neatness and legibility. They must be able to read students' handwriting. Printing is acceptable as long as distinctions between capital and lower-case letters are obvious. It is also acceptable to cross out errors and write the correction above the error. Using white-out is not recommended. Short answers can be written in dark pencil or in blue or black pen.

Part 3. Essay

1. Space is provided in the test booklet for students to plan their essays. The planning is not evaluated by the raters. Students can write anything or nothing on that page. Brainstorming is recommended as research has shown that students who spend time brainstorming write the essay more quickly and clearly than those who do not brainstorm.
2. Students are advised to budget their time, e.g., spend 5 minutes on brainstorming, 30 minutes on writing the essay, and 10 minutes on reviewing and editing. If pressed for time, students should focus on checking spelling and usage for the first or second paragraphs, as these will make the first impression on the raters.
3. Minor errors in grammar will not fail a paper. Serious or repeated errors will result in a failing paper if the raters aren't able to understand the meaning of the writing.
4. For the essay section, students are encouraged to write double-spaced (leave one blank line between each line). Skipping a line helps the reader get used to the student's handwriting, and it gives the student space to revise and edit the essay. It is acceptable to cross out errors

and write the correction above the error. Using white-out is not recommended. The reader will appreciate good editing.

5. The raters also value neatness and legibility. They must be able to read the student's handwriting. Printing is acceptable as long as distinction between capital and lower-case letters is obvious. Essays can be written in dark pencil or in blue or black pen.
6. Essay length alone will not pass or fail a paper. However, essays that are too short because they are not well-developed often fail. Essays should be about 4 to 6 paragraphs in length. Students should be thorough and not assume the raters have shared their experiences or agree with their opinions. Relevant details and examples make a difference in terms of how well ideas will be understood by the raters. Students can make up examples, but the examples must be reasonable. Students are encouraged to include reference(s) to the original passages, but a well-written essay that does not refer to text sources can still pass.
7. During the rating process of the essay section, responses are read and scored independently by two (2) trained raters using a holistic scale for both rhetoric (content and organization) and language (accuracy and complexity)—see the following rubric. The scores given by the raters are averaged.

RHETORIC		LANGUAGE	
Content	Organization	Language: Accuracy	Language: Range and Complexity
<p>9-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The treatment of the assignment completely fulfills the task expectations and the topic is addressed thoroughly. • Fully developed evidence for generalizations and supporting ideas/arguments is provided in a relevant and credible way. • Uses ideas from source text well to support thesis 	<p>9-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and appropriate organizational plan • Effective introduction and conclusion • Connections between and within paragraphs are made through effective and varied use of transitions and other cohesive devices 	<p>9-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is clearly written with few errors; errors do not interfere with comprehension. • Includes consistently accurate word forms and verb tenses. • Word choices are accurate and appropriate 	<p>9-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of sentence types accurately. • Uses a wide range of academic vocabulary • Source text language is used sparingly and accurately incorporated into writer's own words
<p>7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The treatment of the assignment fulfills the task expectations competently and the topic is addressed clearly. • Evidence for generalizations and supporting ideas/arguments is provided in a relevant and credible way. • Ideas from source text used to support thesis 	<p>7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear organizational plan • Satisfactory introduction and conclusion • Satisfactory connections between and within paragraphs using transitions and other cohesive devices 	<p>7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is clearly written but contains some errors that do not interfere with comprehension. • The essay may contain some errors in word choice, word form, verb tenses, and complementation. 	<p>7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay uses a variety of sentence types. • Good range of vocabulary used with at most a few lapses in register • Some language from the source text may be present but is generally well incorporated into writer's own words

<p>5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The treatment of the assignment minimally fulfills the task expectations; some aspects of the task may be slighted. • Some relevant and credible evidence for generalizations and supporting ideas/arguments is provided. • Ideas from source texts are included but may not be explicitly acknowledged as such. 	<p>5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate but simplistic organizational plan • Introduction and conclusion present but may be brief • Connections between and within paragraphs occasionally missing 	<p>5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is generally comprehensible but contains some errors that distract the reader; at most a few errors interfere with comprehension • The essay may contain several errors in word choice, word form, verb tenses, and complementation. 	<p>5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhat limited range of sentence types; may avoid complex structures • Somewhat limited range of vocabulary • May include extensive language from source text(s) with an attempt to incorporate text language with own language
<p>3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The treatment of the assignment only partially fulfills the task expectations and the topic is not always addressed clearly. • Evidence for generalizations and supporting ideas/arguments is insufficient and/or irrelevant. • May not include ideas from source text, or may consist primarily of ideas from source text without integration with writer's ideas 	<p>3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational plan hard to follow • Introduction and conclusion may be missing or inadequate • Connections between and within paragraphs frequently missing 	<p>3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains many errors; some errors may interfere with comprehension. • Includes many errors in word choices, forms, word forms, verb tenses and complementation. 	<p>3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a limited number of sentence types. • Vocabulary limited • Extensive use of source text language with little integration with writer's words
<p>1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The treatment of the assignment fails to fulfill the task expectations and the paper lacks focus and development. • Evidence for generalizations and supporting ideas/arguments is insufficient and/or irrelevant. 	<p>1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No apparent organizational plan • Introduction and conclusion missing or clearly inappropriate • Few connections made between and within paragraphs 	<p>1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains numerous errors that interfere with comprehension. • Includes many errors in word choices, forms, word forms, verb tenses and complementation. 	<p>1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses simple and repetitive vocabulary that may not be appropriate for academic writing. • Does not vary sentence types sufficiently. • May rely almost exclusively on source text language

Scoring

- The scores for both the short-answer section and the essay section are converted into band scores with the following interpretations:

7	Excellent user of English. No ESL.
6	Very good user of English. May benefit from advanced ESL courses in programs with intensive writing and/or speaking demands.
5	Good user of English. May benefit from ESL courses concurrent with regular courses.
4	Fair user of English. Course program should consist primarily of ESL courses.
3	Minimal user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.
2	Very limited user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.
1	Extremely limited user of English. Not ready for content courses in English.

- The exact cutoffs for passing results differ from one form of the test to another; however, the approximate cutoffs for both sections are found in the following table.

Band	Short Answer: Language (average of 2 ratings)	Essay (both rhetoric and language)
7	4-5	16.5-20
6	3-3.5	13-16
5	2.5	10-12.5

- Students must receive at least a **band score of 6 in the short answer section and a band score of 6 in essay rhetoric and 5 in essay language** to pass the writing section of the Regents' GSTEP.

If you have any questions about the structure or scoring of the test, please contact the Regents' GSTEP testing coordinator Megan Montee at (404) 413-5200.