SPEAK Test for International Students

The SPEAK test is the institutional version of the Test of Spoken English (TSE), a test designed by the Educational Testing Service to assess speaking skills. The SPEAK test is frequently used to evaluate the spoken English of international teaching assistants (TAs). This test is available only to students holding or under consideration for a teaching assistantship. SPEAK test scores cannot be sent to or accepted from other educational institutions.

Almost all prospective TAs for whom English is a second language are required to take the SPEAK test, with a few exceptions. Graduate students who have completed all four years of their undergraduate course work at an English-speaking institution are not required to take the SPEAK test. Additionally, those who score 26/30 or higher on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL test or 8.0 or higher on the speaking section of IELTS are exempt from taking the SPEAK test.

Students who score 50 or higher on the SPEAK test are eligible to TA without any additional requirements. Students who score 45 on the SPEAK test may teach only if they are concurrently enrolled in an ESL course or program. Students who score 40 or below are ineligible to teach. It is not uncommon for some students to need to repeat the SPEAK test and continue to take ESL courses until they score high enough to teach without taking an ESL course.

For more information and a sample SPEAK test see https://esl.wisc.edu/ita-training/speak/.