



**Programs in
English as a Second Language
(PIESL)**

**Online English Program
(OEP)**

Handbook

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Welcome to the Online English Program (OEP) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln! The OEP is part of the Office of Programs in English as a Second Language (PIESL).

We are glad that you have chosen to study with us, and we want you to have a great online experience. Your teachers will work hard to provide you with a very high quality educational program so that you will improve your English language skills.

To help get you off to a good start, we have prepared this “Student Handbook and Directory.” It will give you some basic information about the Online English Program and other university resources. **Please read it carefully.** If you have questions that are not answered in the handbook, just ask any OEP staff or faculty member and we will do our best to help you.

Once again, welcome! We are glad you are here!

Chris Dunsmore
Director, Programs in English as a Second Language

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The Online English Program (OEP)



OEP Program Overview

The **Online English Program (OEP)** is for highly-motivated students (intermediate proficiency or higher) who want to improve their academic language skills in order to meet admission requirements to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or other colleges and universities in the United States. It may also be suitable for non-degree seeking students or professionals who want to improve their higher level language skills for work or other purposes. The program is offered completely online, thus eliminating the need to obtain a student visa, pay for housing or meal plans, health insurance, or travel costs that would be required for an in-person program.

Technology Requirements

In order to be successful in the courses, you will want to make sure you have the following:

- Reliable, fast internet connection
 - Download speed of 5 megabits per second recommended
 - Upload speed of at least 5 megabits per second recommended
 - Ping (delay in transferring data) of no more than 75 milliseconds
- Computer with webcam and microphone (phone or tablet not recommended for online study)
- Access to UNL's Canvas course management system. Main technology used in delivering the courses:

Main Technology Used in the Courses

- UNL [Husker Email account](#) (assigned once you have been accepted to the program)
- [Canvas](#) -UNL's learning management system. This might require the use of a [VPN](#) depending on location. **Students are responsible for complying with their local laws and regulations regarding the use of VPN encryption software. Use of the free VPN provided by UNL may not be allowed in certain areas.**
- [Zoom](#) (for video synchronous sessions)

Technical Support

Students needing help with technology can call, email, or web conference with the [Huskertech Help Center](#). Their primary support areas include questions and problems related to:

- Campus network and Internet connections (new requests, configuration, access failure, etc.)
- E-mail (Office 365, directory listing change requests, etc.)
- My.UNL Academic Portal (Canvas)
- UNL system-wide applications and servers
- PC and Mac Software and Hardware problems (operating system, virus eradication, etc.)

OEP Student Online Orientation

All new OEP students will take part in an online orientation prior to the first week of classes. Details and log in information will be sent out once students pay enrollment deposits and submit placement scores.

Levels, Courses and Activities

Courses: The OEP is a non-credit language-training course that provides 16 hours of formal instruction for full-time students each week. Course content is delivered using both synchronous (web conferencing) and asynchronous (self-paced) methods, which allows maximum flexibility for the students while still giving them ample face-face interaction with a real, highly qualified instructor. Additional homework and assignments are required, which brings the total time commitment for full-time students to approximately 25 -30 hours per week. Of course, students have the option of registering only part-time if they choose.

The program offers three levels of proficiency including **intermediate**, **high intermediate** and **advanced**. There are three courses offered at each level:

Reading & Writing (6 hours per week)

Listening & Speaking (6 hours per week)

Grammar (4 hours per week)

Additional Activities: In addition to classes, students may participate in a variety of cultural experiences offered virtually. These may include virtual field trips, social activities with other classes, the International Student & Scholar Office (ISSO), or other university offices.

Advising: OEP Student Success Navigator

The Online English Program offers a **Student Success Navigator** who helps students achieve their language learning goals and guides degree-seeking students

through the transition from OEP to full university classes. Students who have attendance, study skills or other challenges may be referred to the OEP Success Navigator for advice and coaching. The navigator works with students to develop a customized plan for success that meets their individual needs. Of course, students don't need to wait for a referral; they may make an appointment with the Success Navigator whenever they wish. All advising sessions will be held through Zoom and appointments can be made through email or MyPlan.

Placement Testing

Individuals must submit proficiency scores from at least one of the following exams when they apply to the program:

- [TOEFL](#)
- [IELTS](#)
- [Duolingo English Test](#)

These scores will be used to place students into the appropriate level/classes. It is important to designate that the scores be sent directly to UNL when registering for the exam (Do not wait for the results and then send the scores because it delays the enrollment process). Scores must be received at least one week in advance of the start of the term. If you submitted one of these scores to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln when you applied for undergraduate or graduate admission, we will use the score we have on file to place you into the program. Those students with scores that are lower than the ones recommended above should consider applying for the on-campus [Intensive English Program](#).

Placement Adjustments

Our placement methods are usually effective at placing students into the proper levels. However, sometimes adjustments may need to be made. Instructors will be observing student performance closely in the first week of classes and will recommend any placement adjustments to the OEP Director. If the OEP Director believes the student will be better served in another level, the Director will contact the student and make the adjustment. All placement decisions will be made by the beginning of the second week of classes. No adjustments will take place after that time. **Please do not ask your instructor to move you during the first week of classes. Be patient and give them time to make that decision. If you want to be moved, the best course of action you can take is to attend all classes during those first week and perform at the highest level of which you are capable. If you do not attend all classes during the first week of the semester, you will not be considered for placement adjustment.**

Class Section Choices/Changes

Students will be assigned to classes at the discretion of the OEP Director or office manager. All sections in a particular level have the same student learning outcomes (SLO's) and will be taught in a similar manner regardless of the instructor. All instructors are qualified to teach you. Therefore, it really does not matter which section you are placed into or which instructors you work with. What matters is that you take your courses seriously and do your best to attend synchronous sessions, actively participate, complete all the assignments, and maintain a positive attitude.

You may request to change sections as long as the set capacity limit of 12 students has not been met. Once the capacity of 12 students has been reached, you will be registered in a section chosen by the Director or the Director's assistant. Our first priority is to make classes sizes as small and as linguistically diverse (in terms of 1st languages) as we can make them. This means you may not always get the section or instructors you want, and you may not always get to take classes with your friends. **The Program Director will have the final determination of your section in all cases.**

You may request a change of sections only once per semester, and the request must be made before the official enrollment period ends (usually by the end of the first week of classes). Your request will usually be granted as long as the section you want is currently open and has not reached the 12 student capacity limit. If you request a section that already has 12 or more students, your request will probably be denied. You will have more freedom to choose classes once you have completed the language program and start taking academic courses at UNL. For now, please accept the schedule you are given in most cases, and do your best to learn from those instructors while making new friends within your assigned classes.

Keep in mind that it might be necessary for the Director to switch your section based on unexpected enrollment increases in the first week. Sometimes we have to open up new sections because of late arrivals or close sections because students do not arrive and we may require you to switch sections in order to even out class numbers. You should expect that you might be required to change to a different section during the first two weeks of classes. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but it really is for your ultimate benefit.

OEP Course Delivery

OEP courses delivery involves the use of both synchronous (specific meeting times through web conferencing) and asynchronous (self-paced) meeting times. In addition, you may need to attend group project sessions at times convenient for the

entire group, join in synchronous (real-time) office hours, attend online presentations, or participate in real-time exam reviews.

You must be able to commit approximately 25-30 hours per week if you take all courses in a level. You should expect to post to discussion boards, blogs and journals; participate in group projects; complete readings and engage with videos, podcasts, and presentations; or be a part of other activities consistently throughout the week. You must be self-motivated to be successful in this program.

As an online student, you will be interacting with other students and your instructor. You will meet students from many different backgrounds and situations. Using chat, video conferencing, email, social media, discussion boards, and more, you can stay connected with fellow students and faculty, building networks that will last long after your class has ended.

Your courses are taught by faculty who understand the specific needs of learners studying at a distance. Special consideration is given to advance planning and setting expectations in the distance/online classroom; thus, each class is outlined in a syllabus distributed at the start of the course. The syllabus is your guide to the class—it provides an overview of the course assignments, grading strategy, expectations, course materials, deadlines, course goals, and learning outcomes.

Asynchronous Classes

Students in the OEP will be required to complete much of the course work in an asynchronous manner, meaning on their own time. All of the necessary materials will be found the Canvas Learning Management system in self-directed modules. Remember that even when your courses do not have regularly scheduled class times, you are still required to complete assignments and tests by specific deadlines.

Synchronous Class Hours

The OEP will also have some synchronous class sessions each week that are offered through the video conferencing software called Zoom. These sessions are generally held Monday through Friday starting at 7:00 am and ending by 9:00 am (Central Standard Time in the United States). This time frame was chosen because it allows for reasonable time zone accommodation for most countries. Students will want to take this into consideration before applying to the program. Students who cannot make the synchronous sessions may still join the course, but would need to participate in the program completely asynchronously. The instructor will record the synchronous sessions (or post other videos) and allow students to watch them at their own convenience as long as they keep up with the course. Still, it is highly recommended to attend the synchronous sessions if at all possible to get face to face interaction with the instructors and other peers.

Below is an example of what the synchronous schedule might be:

| OEP Synchronous Class Schedule (Intermediate -Advanced) | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 7:00-7:50 am | Speaking/Listening | Grammar | Speaking/Listening | Grammar | Speaking/Listening |
| 8:00-8:50 am | Reading/Writing | Reading Writing Office hours | Reading/Writing | Grammar Office Hours | speaking/listening office hours |
| 9:00-9:50 am | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Number of Hours Required (High Intermediate - Advanced) | | | | | |
| Class | Synchronous Hours | Asynchronous Hours | Total Hours | | |
| Speaking-Listening | 3 | 3 | 6 | | |
| Reading/Writing | 2 | 4 | 6 | | |
| Grammar | 2 | 2 | 4 | | |
| TOTAL | 7 | 9 | 16 | | |

Progressing Through and Completing the OEP

Level Progression:

Students who want to move to a higher level in the OEP will generally need to complete two 8-week terms (both A & B) with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher for the full level. Students may also submit a qualifying score from one of the exams listed below at the end of each 8-week session. Since it takes time to get the scores results, please plan to take the exams well in advance. The exam websites should contain information on the amount of time it takes to get results. Exam scores must be received by the first day of the term in order to apply to that term.

- [TOEFL](#)
- [IELTS](#)
- [Duolingo English Test](#)

Program Progression/UNL Admission:

Students who want to take full academic classes at the [University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#) (UNL) in the following semester **must be admitted to UNL*** and must meet the [English proficiency requirements](#) by submitting scores from one of the exams listed above. Conditionally admitted UNL students in the High Intermediate or Advanced levels of OEP may meet the requirements to join the [Credit EAP program](#) by achieving a 3.0 cumulative GPA or a qualifying test score. Please note that the University deadlines for submitting proficiency test scores for CEAP or full-admission are NOT the same as the deadlines required for OEP level placement.

**Students who are admitted only to the OEP must also [apply for full admission](#) to UNL. Admission to OEP alone does NOT guarantee admission to UNL. Of course, attending in-person classes will also require students to obtain a student visa to enter the United States.*

Textbooks and Materials

Textbooks and Materials:

- Many materials will be provided through Canvas for students by the instructors
- e-book purchases may also be required (estimate \$200 for books and materials if all three classes are taken)

Engagement/Attendance Policy

Regularly attending the synchronous sessions and engaging with the course materials on your own time is essential if you want to succeed in the program and improve your language ability. Students who do not regularly engage in their courses may be asked to drop a class or may be dismissed entirely from the program. Instructors spend a lot of time creating lesson plans and activities that often require students to work together. If you don't regularly engage, your behavior may negatively impact the performance of your peers. Accordingly, each instructor will post a course syllabus that will contain their policy on engagement. You are expected to adhere to each instructor's policy on attendance and engagement, including the submission of assignments.

If you are not able to attend a session or complete an assignment, the best course of action is to contact the instructor in advance (whenever possible) and ask them what you can do, if anything, to make up the work. Most instructors will generally be flexible and understanding, but only if you take responsibility for your actions and demonstrate your willingness to make up work in a timely fashion.

Absences for Religious Observances – Absences for religious purposes are allowed under the following circumstances:

- Instructors must be notified in advance of the absence within the first two weeks of classes.** Students should make the request in writing so there is a record of the request. You should give the exact dates that you need to be absent.
- Missed work is made up as required by the instructor in the time frame allotted by the instructor.

If instructors are not notified in advance, or if missed work is not made up as required by the instructor, the work may not be accepted.

Exceptional Circumstances -- It is understood that in rare cases students may encounter very difficult problems such as a serious illness or a family crisis while enrolled in the OEP. If such a situation arises, the student should contact the director of the OEP to discuss the situation. Each case will be handled individually. Usually the student will be advised to withdraw from classes if the situation will result in missing a significant portion of the term. Partial refunds may or may not be possible depending on the amount of time already spent in classes. This will be determined by the University Registrar.

In order to comply with the engagement/attendance policy, students should try to schedule all appointments (routine medical, personal, academic, etc.) when synchronous classes are not in session.

OEP Probation/Dismissal Policy

We want all students in the Online English Program to be successful. PIESL faculty and staff will make every effort to help students achieve their goals, but students must also do their part by regularly attending classes and completing assignments to the best of their abilities. Students who are not able to meet those expectations will be placed on probation and eventually dismissed if they are not able to improve. The procedures by which this will happen are described below.

Probation 1

Any OEP student with a grade point average (GPA) that is below 2.0 at the end of an 8-week term will be put on probation. The student will be notified through their Husker email account and required to meet with the PIESL Student Success Navigator to discuss their performance. They will be allowed to study for an additional term under the condition that they raise their cumulative GPA to at least 2.0 by the end of the second term.

Probation 2

Any OEP student with a cumulative GPA that is still below 2.0 at the end of their 2nd 8-week term in the program will be placed on Probation 2. The student will again be notified through their Husker email account and required to meet with the PIESL Success Navigator. The Success Navigator will work with the student to develop a recovery plan before the student is allowed to register for an additional term. The student is then required to meet with the Success Navigator every two weeks to review the plan and discuss their academic progress. Failure to attend any of these required meetings may lead to dismissal.

Dismissal

Any student who still has a cumulative GPA below 2.0 at the end of the third term, or who has not met with the Success Navigator as required under probation 2

status, will be dismissed from the OEP. Dismissed students may not register for any additional classes in the Online English Program.

Dismissed students may appeal their dismissal to the Director of Programs in English as a Second Language. All appeals must be made by email and received within one week of the dismissal notice being sent to the Husker account. The Director of PIESL will consider the appeal and determine if the student's reasons warrant another opportunity. In the process, the Director may request a meeting with the student and may consult with the student's previous instructors. If an appeal is granted, the student must sign an agreement that outlines the requirements for being allowed to stay another semester, which will include a continuation of the success plan developed by the student and the Success Navigator. Any violation of the agreement will result in final dismissal from the OEP. No further appeals will be considered after that happens for any reason.

Please note that OEP dismissal is handled the same as UNL dismissal. Students dismissed from the OEP must wait two semesters before UNL will consider readmitting them to any program. It does not matter if you have achieved a TOEFL / IELTS score that meets admissions requirements during that time; if you are dismissed from OEP, you must wait two semesters regardless of your proficiency test scores.

Tuition and Fees

Billing information, including how to pay for your tuition and fees, can be found through the [Husker Hub Student Services Portal](#). Note that the tuition rates found on this page are not the same as the OEP. For the OEP rates, please visit the [Estimated Program Costs](#) page of the PIESL website.

Your monthly bill includes your tuition, university fees, and possibly inclusive access fees for your textbooks. Your bill is available in MyRED by the 25th of each month and due the 12th of the following month. You will receive an email from Student Accounts each month when your bill is available to view online. If you fail to pay your bill, there will be a \$35 Late Payment Fee and a Delinquent Hold. Delinquent accounts will have a hold placed, which prevents further registration as well as preventing release of transcripts and/or diplomas. The account must be brought current to have this hold removed.

Classroom Expectations

Standards of appropriate classroom behavior may differ from country to country. To be successful as students in the United States, it is important that you understand the common expectations of professors and other students in this country. Most university students take their education seriously and do not

appreciate classroom distractions from other students. In addition to regular attendance, students are expected to follow these rules:

◆ **Attend any synchronous class sessions on time.**

When log in late, you miss part of the lesson and you disrupt the class for the instructor and other students. Your instructor may deny you virtual entry to the classroom if you are excessively late.

◆ **Purchase required textbooks and materials.**

Many materials for the Online English Program will be provided by the instructors to the students at no cost. Some classes will require the students to purchase textbooks. Every effort has been made to select textbooks that should be available for purchase in other countries. In some cases, access to the textbook will be provided to you through our Canvas learning management system. When that happens, you will be charged for this access through your Husker account. As in other university classes, your instructor will give you a syllabus which lists the required books and materials and will go over what you need to purchase.

If you purchase your textbooks on-line, you must have them delivered as quickly as possible. You must have them by the beginning of the third week of classes. It is highly suggested that you choose express delivery service if you choose to order the books on-line.

◆ **Complete the assigned work.**

The amount of homework given in each class will vary, but all students are required to complete these assignments and will be graded accordingly. When you return to class from an absence, you will be expected to make up all the work you have missed. You are responsible for making arrangements with each of your instructors for any missed assignments; they will probably NOT mention make-up work to you because the student is responsible for making this request in American university culture.

Assigned work, including homework, is designed to help you practice your language skills. Failure to complete homework assignments will negatively impact your final grade in the course. Do not expect your instructor to give you extra credit assignments to make up for missed work. Complete your assignments on time, every time, and you should do well in your courses.

◆ **Ask questions and participate in class activities.**

Do not hesitate to ask your instructors about any aspect of the OEP, especially about work you are required to do for class. If you do not understand materials or instructions, it is very important that you ask.

Students in the United States frequently ask such questions, and their instructors expect such behavior.

◆ **Avoid behavior which may be distracting to the instructor or to other students.**

In synchronous sessions, students should turn off any additional electronic devices such as cell phones and avoid talking or texting other students while the instructor or other students are speaking. This is considered very rude behavior and may be a violation of the UNL code of student conduct. Any violation could result in discipline or dismissal from the program. You are also highly encouraged to have your camera turned on and your mic on mute when you are not speaking. Having your camera on allows your instructor to see your mouth move when you are speaking and helps you stay engaged with the class. It is too easy to not pay attention when your camera is off. Having your mic off when not speaking keeps the noise distractions for the entire group to a minimum. It is understood that sometimes your internet connection may be poor resulting in the need to turn off the camera. Just communicate that with your instructor and turn on when needed.

Tips for Learning English

Learning a language is hard work, but it is also fun. The amount of time it takes a person to learn a second language depends on many factors such as motivation, native language, and educational background. Sometimes people are surprised by how long it can take to achieve their goals in English.

Here are some quick tips that will help you achieve your English language goals more quickly, and enjoy the process:

- ◆ Maintain a positive attitude – even if classes are challenging
- ◆ Take good care of your health – mental and physical
- ◆ Attend all synchronous class sessions if you can
- ◆ Complete all assignments and submit them to your instructor by the due dates
- ◆ Be responsible for your own learning
- ◆ Participate actively in synchronous classes and in online discussions
- ◆ Ask questions and ask for help if you need it

Academic Integrity

OEP students are expected to maintain the standards of academic honesty as explained in the university's [Student Code of Conduct](#). Academic dishonesty includes cheating (such as copying from another student's test or similar actions),

plagiarism (which means presenting someone else's writing or speech as if it were your own), and complicity (which means helping another student participate in an act of academic dishonesty).

Universities in the United States, including the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, consider academic dishonesty a very serious issue. Students, including international students, can be and have been expelled from UNL for academic dishonesty.

If you are unsure about the meaning of academic integrity, ask one of your teachers or refer to the [Academic Catalog](#) which is a guide for undergraduate and graduate students published yearly.

Grievance Procedures

Grievance with Instructor:

If an OEP student encounters an academic problem related to an OEP course involving issues such as grades, attendance or assignments, the student should first make an appointment with the instructor of that particular class to discuss the problem. In most cases, the student and instructor will work out a solution.

If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the student may appeal to the Director of the OEP. The student may do this by making an appointment with the program director, Chris Dunsmore, at cdunsmore2@unl.edu. Mr. Dunsmore will work with the student to set up a video conference to mediate the dispute.

Grievance with Staff:

If an OEP student encounters a problem with the staff assistant related to such matters as registration holds, the student should first attempt to resolve the issue by discussing it directly with the staff assistant. In most cases, this will resolve the issue.

If the disagreement cannot be resolved in this manner, the student may appeal to the Director of the OEP, Mr. Chris Dunsmore at cdunsmore2@unl.edu. Mr. Dunsmore will work with the student to set up a video conference to mediate the dispute.

Admission to UNL

The University has several requirements for admission in addition to the English language requirement. The admissions process is different for undergraduate and graduate students. If you plan to study at UNL, it is best to get started on the admissions process early.

For more information, undergraduates should contact [Undergraduate Admissions Office](#).

Admissions requirements for graduate students differ from department to department. For more information, contact your department or The [Office of Graduate Studies](#).

Remember that admissions to the Online English Program is not the same as admission to UNL for degree programs. Some OEP students may be conditionally admitted to UNL and others may just be admitted to the OEP only. If you are not sure about your status, please check with the OEP Director.