

ITAOI Summary and Sample Tasks

The International Teaching Assistant Oral Interaction (ITAOI) is a live, face-to-face speaking test used at Michigan State University to certify the speaking proficiency of prospective Teaching Assistants (TAs).

Part One – Presentation (12 minutes)

Exactly one hour before the test begins, each student is given two 'Concept Cards' with a short list of key terms or basic concepts from their field. These concepts are provided by the student's department and approved by the ELC Testing Office. The department ensures that the concepts are well known and not too complex. The student then has one hour to prepare a 10 minute lesson on one of the topics listed on the Concept Card. The lesson should include the following:

- definition of key terms
- use of a graph, chart, or diagram

The last 2 minutes of the lesson should include a short summary of the key points of the lesson

Sample concepts:

Physics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Gravity•Acceleration•Force
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Supply and Demand•Cost-Benefit Analysis•Inflation
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Colonialism•The Renaissance•Civil wars

Two trained examiners with extensive experience in the field of English as a Second Language serve as raters and act as students. They will ask questions about the lesson, both during the lesson and at the end of the lesson. The question period will take about 2 minutes.

Part Two – Office Hours Role Play (4 minutes)

One of the two examiners will play the role of an undergraduate student, and will come to the TA's office hours to discuss a problem or situation occurring in the class. The candidate is given a short description of the scenario before the role play begins. During the role play, the TA must assess the situation described by the student and negotiate a reasonable solution.

Example Role Play:

Situation

Background for TA: You have been teaching an undergraduate class in your major subject. One of your best students comes to see you during your office hours. It is the week before the final exam.

Interviewer's Role: "Hi, I just want to say that I've learned a lot in this course and really appreciate your instruction. However, I have to leave town before finals week and will not be able to take the last exam. So far I have a 4.0 grade average...so please tell me what I can do to make sure I earn a high grade for the course"

Part 3 (see next page)

Part Three – Classroom Announcement (4 minutes)

The candidate is given a short memo regarding a classroom announcement of some kind and is instructed to review the memo and then give a brief presentation about the content of the memo to the two examiners playing the role of students. The examiners may then ask follow-up or clarification questions about the contents of the memo.

Example classroom announcement:

You will present as if you are a graduate teaching assistant who must give the information listed below to your class. You may use your own words; you may organize the information in any way that you wish, and you may write notes on this sheet; you may add extra information or explanations of your own.

You will have one minute to read the details below. Then you will present this information to your “class”. You may refer to this sheet when giving your announcement. Expect to be asked questions about the announcement.

Situation: Announcement of Midterm Examination Changes

- When:
 - On Tuesday of next week, rather than on Thursday as originally scheduled
 - The exam will begin at 8:00 AM and end at 10:00 AM.
- Where
 - The exam will be in B125, Wells Hall rather than in the regular classroom.
- The exam will cover only the first 3 chapters of the textbook and not the extra material covered during lectures.
- Students may not bring any books or personal belongings to the exam room.

Other changes to original plan:

- The exam will not be delivered online due to technical difficulties with the computers. Instead, students will be given 2 sheets of paper and 2 pencils and told to write a response to questions that will be shown on the big screen in the front of the room.
- The exam grades will not be available for two weeks.
- Students who are absent on the day of the exam will receive a grade of “0” unless special arrangements are made ahead of time.

Evaluation

The ITAOI is rated on the same scale (20-60) as the MSU Speaking Test. Candidates are evaluated based on their ability to speak spontaneously and clearly (comprehensibly) while giving complete and appropriate responses to the tasks and examiner questions.