

WCT tough for international students

by Lutful Kabir Khan

Twenty-five international students who have failed the WCT more than three times are in danger of being required to withdraw from the U of A next term.

But according to Dr. Lorna McCallum of testing and remediation, 14 out of those 25 have passed the January 28th test.

"The rest still have the option to appeal and write the test again," said McCallum.

She also refuted as false the allegations that the test topics often do not relate to international students. "The topics are mostly very general and universal," said McCallum, "they are all okayed by the Office of International Students Affairs (OISA) before being put on the

exam."

She also maintained that the test is highly reliable in measuring writing competency in English. "Each paper is separately marked by two different markers," she said, "and the correlation coefficient between those two marks are 86%, which is very high."

Presently there are seven markers holding degrees in English and Linguistics. The markers look for clear organization, well-constructed paragraphs, and accuracy in sentence structure, grammar, word use, spelling, and punctuation.

"There is no reason why the test should be unfair to international students," she said. "All entering students are expected to have the same standard of competency in English."

But students have a very different view. "The topics are very irrelevant," said Hung Deung, originally from Vietnam, "and the remedial course is of little help to the international students... I think that in high school and in university, there should be specific courses just for the students whose mother tongue is not English."

Dick Tembo from Zimbabwe passed the test on the first try, but still thinks the WCT is unfair for international students because they aren't able to write about as many topics as Canadian students.

"After elimination of the often incomprehensible topics about western culture," Dick said, "what is left is often a very general topic, but a topic that is very hard to write about."

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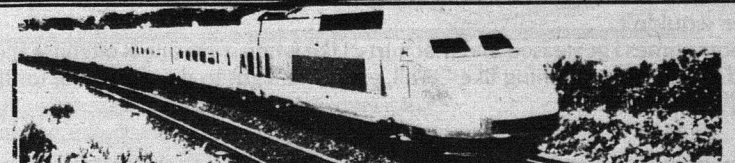
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