

iTEP Case Study:

El Bosque University

Assessing the English proficiency of university graduates in Colombia.



About iTEP

The International Test of English Proficiency (iTEP) was introduced in 2008 to modernize English language assessment with on-demand scheduling, 24-hour grading, and accurate test data. iTEP provides a convenient and cost-effective testing option delivered in a highly secure test center environment or remotely at-home.

iTEP offers academic testing for secondary schools and universities for both admissions and on-campus ESL programs. iTEP also offers a range of career testing used by companies around the world to determine English proficiency needed for hiring and promotion decisions. For more information see www.itepexam.com.

Case Summary

Upon noticing the lack of progressive advancement of their citizens in the global market, in 2014 the Colombian government instituted an English language proficiency requirement for all undergraduate and graduate students as part of their university degree programs. The national education goal is intended to prepare students for greater job opportunities and career growth by removing the English language barrier.

In accordance with the national educational goal and the University's own desire to provide the highest level of academic instruction and preparation for their students, El Bosque University needed a way to accurately, efficiently, and economically test every student's English language proficiency prior to graduation. The correct testing product would require a proven assessment format, an easy implementation process, fair pricing, and global use and recognition of the exam. Additionally, the English language proficiency requirements varied greatly by academic discipline within the institution making a university-gener-

ated exam arduous and rendering it all but useless to the students outside of the graduation requirement.

At the time, Dr. Marta Montiel was the coordinator for the Language Center at El Bosque University and responsible for identifying and implementing a testing solution. Her choice: iTEP – The International Test of English Proficiency. With a proven track record, a responsive and supportive team, an attractive price point, and a global reputation, iTEP checked every box and has been the university's official English language proficiency exam ever since.



The Problem

The Colombian government and El Bosque University shared a common goal: to see their students and citizens succeed on a global level. While the country's educational institutions were working to provide the highest level of subject-matter expertise, the government felt students were falling behind due to a common barrier: English language proficiency.

El Bosque University had had a general language requirement in place since 2009, but as part of the Colombia government's educational goals for the country, a language requirement specific to English was implemented in 2014. Thus, every student graduating from an undergraduate or graduate program was required to demonstrate a certain level of English language

proficiency to complete their degree requirements.

With the new requirement it became apparent to Dr. Marta Montiel, then coordinator of the university's language center, that their current language proficiency testing would no longer be an effective model. Thus, she set out to source and implement a new test administered by the university that would: provide an accurate evaluation of a student's written and verbal English proficiency; easily adapt to each program's needs; simplify the testing process across departments; be accessible in price and format to all socioeconomic classes of students; and be accepted globally as a reputable English language proficiency assessment.

The Approach

Understanding the importance of English proficiency for the success of their students and in compliance with the new government's educational goals, Dr. Montiel knew whatever testing process and product the University chose was an important decision. Thus, the process to find a product was not undertaken lightly. Dr. Montiel spent a considerable amount of time researching, testing, and evaluating the right solution for El Bosque University. This included evaluating the TOEFL, Cambridge Assessment, British Council English test, and even the idea of creating their own institutional English language assessment tool.

"We considered developing our own exam, but realized it has to be valid and reliable, and that can be very expensive to accomplish," said Montiel. "Having a good exam is not easy, and an internally created exam is not going to work for every case. We also wanted something with global recognition which the students could use outside of our university to prove their English proficiency."

In search of a product that fit all their needs, they quickly found that the TOEFL exam was too expensive and inaccessible for many of their students, while the Cambridge Assessment and British Council testing techniques were overly complicated and created additional barriers for students. It quickly became evident to Montiel that iTEP's ease of use, attractive price point, global reputation, and validity/reliability attributes were the right solution.

"I believe it's been great," said Montiel. "The iTEP test content is continually updated, developing every year; it's always improv-

ing, making it very dynamic. The help and customer support that iTEP's team provides was also important to us."

The iTEP Solution

In Colombia, the implementation of an English language proficiency exam was a matter of national concern and priority. The desire to see citizens achieve professional success was at the heart of the new English language proficiency policies, and El Bosque University was firmly aligned with those goals. But to comply, educators at El Bosque knew it was time to bring their English language testing to a new level, and iTEP was the provider that could meet their requirements to do it.

iTEP's flagship exam – Academic Plus – was the right product at the right time for El Bosque University. iTEP's exclusive distributor in Colombia – eDistribution – has provided a high level of test security and support, yet has remained flexible for students. For over six years now, El Bosque has been a proud iTEP testing partner to help their students, and the country of Colombia, compete on a global stage.

When the Colombian government enacted policies to advance their citizens and their country, iTEP was, and continues to be, the partner of choice in assessing and evaluating the English proficiency needed to accomplish their goals. By quickly, securely, and accurately testing a student's level of proficiency in English, iTEP is an important tool in place to help El Bosque students succeed. It is a tool that students can take with them beyond the university's doors into a bright future.

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Dr. Marta Montiel, Coordinator for the Language Center at El Bosque University