



The University of Chicago
Department of Statistics

Master's Seminar

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**Evaluating the Effectiveness of the
TOEFL Tests as a Measure of English Proficiency
for International Teaching Assistants**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the usefulness of the TOEFL test as a criterion of foreign graduate students' language ability as teaching assistants. The end-of-quarter teaching evaluations by the in-class students for the international teaching assistants in one department at the University of Chicago for 2000-2007, was used as the criterion measure. The relationship between this evaluation of students and the teaching assistants TOEFL scores was studied using Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves. ROC curves suggest that among students already admitted to the graduate program the TOEFL test as a criterion of these foreign students English ability is weak, perhaps no more effective than a random allocation. This weak relationship is also supported by Binary logistic regression and correlation analysis between the evaluation measure and the TOEFL test.