

Vericant Interview Guide for ‘TOEFL ITP Plus for China’

Introduction

This guide provides some guidance to university admissions teams on how to best use the Vericant interview.

Vericant has been a trusted provider of third party admissions interviews for almost 10 years. The following recommendations have been compiled from our learnings and observations while working with some of the world’s most competitive academic institutions during that time.

What is the Vericant Interview?

The Vericant Interview is a short video interview conducted by a trained interviewer and sent to the school to be used as part of a student’s application materials. The interview allows the admissions team to have a more holistic understanding of the student’s communication skills, personality and behavior.

The video interview is 10-12 minutes in length and includes 5 sections:

- An introduction section
- A picture section where a student is asked to discuss one of two photographs they are shown during the interview
- An in-depth discussion section
- A study plan section* to discuss their educational background and/or aspirations, and
- A free speech section where students can talk about any topics they want

** For students applying to high school, this section is replaced with a “Chinese question” section, during which a student is asked a question in Chinese and must answer in Chinese. This section is translated and English subtitles are added, allowing one to see how a student communicates in their native language.*

How should I use the Vericant Interview?

The Vericant interview gives you a chance to ‘meet’ the applicant in your own time and from the convenience of your office. Below are some suggestions on how to watch the interview and how to conduct a simple language assessment on the interview

Watching the Interview

Option 1: Thorough - 'understand'

To get the best sense of the applicant, and learn more about the way they think and communicate, we suggest you watch the entire interview. This is best done in situations where an applicant is one of your shortlisted candidates or a borderline candidate. This gives you better insight on what the applicant will be like in person and can help you make a final decision on whether or not to admit them.

Option 2: Quick - 'get a feel'

Watch about one minute of one or two portions of the interview to get a 'feel' for the applicant. You may find watching either part of the picture section and/or part of the in-depth section sufficiently revealing. In the picture section, the applicant is asked questions about one of two photographs that they have not seen beforehand. This section allows you to gain a sense of how well the applicant handles a situation in which they may not be familiar with the subject. In the in-depth section, the applicant is asked more detailed questions and follow-up questions to allow them to speak on a subject more deeply. This section best showcases the applicant's ability to respond coherently on multiple subjects.

Option 3: Minimal - 'verify language ability'

Use the video as a quick confirmation that the applicant's language ability is consistent with their test scores and other application materials. Watching one or more 20-30 second portions will give you a quick sense of whether or not the applicant's language abilities are as expected.

Option 4: As a team

Watch the applicant's video as a team when making final decisions on applicants. In borderline cases, it can be useful for more than one member of your team to see how the applicant communicates in a live conversational situation.

Scoring the Interview

If your institution would benefit from having a score for each interview, you may consider following the spoken language assessment method below:

- 1) Decide on how much of the video to watch. Either watch the entire video, or if time is limited, select two to three 2-minute portions of the video interview.
(TIP: If only watching portions, we suggest selecting at least one portion of the picture section, and one portion from the in-depth section. You can jump straight to any section with a single click using the quick links provided.)
- 2) Using the Speaking Rating Rubric provided, watch the video (or just your selected portions) while focusing on each of five categories (Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence) in turn.
- 3) Identify which level (1 to 4) the student best falls under for each of the five categories.
- 4) Sum the levels for all five categories to get a total score out of 20.
- 5) Use the Score Guide below to get a general understanding of the student's conversational English aptitude.

Below, under "Example Interview Clips", are some example clips of students at various levels according to the rubric. This can help you get a better sense of each of the levels in the rubric.

Speaking Rating Rubric

Approach: In order to increase recognition and familiarity, in designing this rubric, we have been guided by the principles and guidelines outlined in the CEFR. The rubric was further revised to allow for increased accessibility to those that may not be versed in linguistics and language assessment, and therefore any connections to the CEFR should only be understood as guidelines or estimations.

Score	Range	Accuracy	Fluency	Interaction	Coherence
4	Speaker is able to use advanced and simple words with very few mistakes	Speaker does not make any noticeable grammatical errors	Speaker produces clear, controlled speech without any mispronunciations	Speaker is engaged, understands the question completely and responds with relevant answers	Speaker is able to produce discourse with a clear main idea connected with advanced connectors
3	Speaker is able to mostly use advanced words but might use a couple words out of context	Speaker maintains control over most grammatical rules but might make a few noticeable mistakes	Speaker is intelligible despite making a few noticeable pronunciation/ pacing errors	Speaker is engaged but might need some clarification from the interviewer	Speaker is able to produce discourse with a clear main idea, but may ramble about an unimportant detail
2	Speaker mainly relies on simple vocabulary but is able to get their point across	Speaker makes grammatical mistakes frequently, but is still comprehensible	Speaker's pace is choppy and/ or their pronunciation is slightly difficult to understand at times	Speaker is able to sustain a conversation, but it feels more like a Q&A	Speaker is able to provide followable discourse, but main idea is not clear and details are somewhat disorganized or lacking
1	Speaker cannot comfortably use simple vocabulary	Speaker consistently makes grammatical mistakes that affect meaning.	Speaker is incomprehensible or produces long pauses that require intervention	Speaker is unable to sustain a conversation and requires constant prodding	Speaker does not provide a relevant main idea or storytelling is so nonlinear that it is hard to follow

Score Guide

18-20 : Highly Proficient - This student should have **no difficulty** operating in a fully immersed English language environment. This level estimates a high C1 to a C2 on the CEFR.

14-17 : Proficient - This student should have **very little difficulty** operating in a fully immersed English language environment. This level estimates a B2 to a C1 on the CEFR.

10-13 : Sufficient - This student should have a **moderate level of difficulty** operating in a fully immersed English language environment. This level estimates a high B1 on the CEFR.

5-9 : Insufficient - This student should have a **high level of difficulty** operating in a fully immersed English language environment. This level estimates an A1 to A2 on the CEFR.

Example Video Clips

Score	Level	Video
19	Highly Proficient	https://f001.backblazeb2.com/file/interview-harvest/videos/student_video/videos_None_7356dae5718448bca0af85bca27e4e4e.mp4
17	Proficient	https://f001.backblazeb2.com/file/interview-harvest/videos/student_video/videos_None_37e1d08fb6a0403ea40d53a8e44a19a1.mp4
17	Proficient	https://f001.backblazeb2.com/file/interview-harvest/videos/school_video/videos_None_6651c4b3ed664b0f9a44aa9a0658af7a.mp4
11	Sufficient (Low)	https://f001.backblazeb2.com/file/interview-harvest/videos/student_video/videos_None_6e576016586849958c81b95ff10a5831.mp4
10	Sufficient (Low)	https://f001.backblazeb2.com/file/interview-harvest/videos/student_video/videos_None_125522e08f6d44edb78629a21e6fe814.mp4