DEMONSTRATING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TO SATISFY NEW J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA REQUIREMENTS

These new requirements are effective for any DS-2019 requests processed after January 1st, 2015.

The new regulation at 22 CFR 62.11(a) states:

Selection of exchange visitors. Sponsors must establish and utilize a method to screen and select prospective exchange visitors to ensure that they are eligible for program participation, and that:

(1) The program is suitable to the exchange visitor’s background, needs, and experience; and

(2) Specifically, The Department of State wants sponsors to ensure that exchange visitors have “sufficient English proficiency to perform their jobs, navigate daily life in the United States, read and comprehend program materials, understand fully their responsibilities, rights, and protections, and know how to obtain assistance.”

(3) The exchange visitor possesses sufficient proficiency in the English language, as determined by an objective measurement of English language proficiency, successfully to participate in his or her program and to function on a day-to-day basis. A sponsor must verify an applicant's English language proficiency through one of the following methods

   a. Scoring at a certain level on a recognized English language test,

   b. Signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school, or

   c. Documented interview conducted by the sponsor either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option.

Departments will submit a certification form to ISSIS during the sponsorship request process that affirms points 1 and 2, and clarifies which method of English assessment outlined in point 3 was used. Departments must submit evidence of how they measured applicants’ English language proficiency so that it can be made available to the U.S. Department of State upon request.
The ISSIS office will accept the following as a demonstration of English language proficiency for visiting scholars on J-1 visas:

- **Visiting scholars whose native language is English:**
  - Certification by the inviting department faculty member that English is the native language of prospective visitor.

- **Visiting scholars who obtained degrees from institutions at which the language of instruction is English:**
  - Copy of diploma or transcript AND a letter from the institution certifying that English is a language of instruction there
  
  OR
  
  - Letter on institution’s letterhead certifying completion of degree AND a letter from the institution certifying that English is a language of instruction there

- **All other scholars:**
  - An iBT, TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS test score meeting or exceeding the standards outlined by UGA, and taken within the last two years
    - If the scores meet or exceed the following levels, no further evidence is required:
      - Internet-based TOEFL: ≥60
      - Paper-based TOEFL: ≥500
      - TOEIC: ≥650
      - IELTS: ≥6
      - MELAB: ≥69
      - Pearson Test of English: ≥54
    
    - If the scores do not meet one of the above levels, the inviting department faculty member will need to submit a statement as to why reduced English language ability is acceptable given the scholar’s planned academic program, and provided inter-cultural and language interpretation support from the department. **NOTE: If this option is chosen, the department will be required to confirm that a translator will be available to the scholar during the academic program.**

  OR

  - Signed documentation from an English Language Institute, or an academic institution, confirming at least a *High Beginner* level of English.
  
  OR

  - A recorded videoconference interview demonstrating the scholar’s proficiency in English, as evaluated by UGA’s ISSIS office.