English Language Proficiency Documentation for J-1 International Visiting Scholars

The U.S. Department of State (DoS) mandates English language proficiency for all international scholars invited to the U.S. under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa program (22 CFR Sec. 62.10(a)). Specifically, J-1 program sponsors such as UGA are required by DoS regulations to establish, prior to their participation in the J-1 exchange program, that all international scholars have “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” (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)). These requirements include that scholars should have sufficient abilities in English to be able to perform their jobs or otherwise benefit from their program; read and comprehend program materials; navigate daily life in the United States; understand fully their responsibilities, rights, and protections; and be able to obtain assistance in an emergency.

To assure UGA’s compliance with these regulations, English language proficiency for scholars seeking J-1 visas and whose applications are received on or after September 15, 2017, must be documented in one of the following three ways.

**Option 1: Test Score**

Federal regulations allow that scholars may document their English language proficiency through “a recognized English language test” (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)). UGA will accept the following scores from the following tests for scholars who select this option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptable English Proficiency Test</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Comparable Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL IBT speaking test subscore</td>
<td>60 overall score; minimum Speaking sub-test score-17</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEIC (Speaking only--not general TOEIC)</td>
<td>Minimum Speaking score of 120</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS speaking subtest band score</td>
<td>Minimum Speaking sub-test band score of 5.5</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge English: preliminary</td>
<td>Pass with minimum Speaking score of 140</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge English: first</td>
<td>Receive Cambridge English Certificate of B1; minimum Speaking score of 140</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge English: advanced</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge English: proficiency</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTFL: OPI</td>
<td>Intermediate Mid</td>
<td>B1</td>
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<td>Intermediate Mid</td>
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</table>
Option 2: Documentation from a Previous Institution
Federal regulations also allow that scholars may document their English language proficiency through “signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school” (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)). Applicants who select this option must provide one of the following:

a) signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school certifying that their proficiency in English is adequate for them to “participate in his or her program and to function on a day-to-day basis” in the United States (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)), or

b) documentation of having completed a degree at an institution or in a program where English was the language of instruction.

Option 3: Interview
Finally, the federal regulations allow that English proficiency may be established “through a documented interview conducted by the sponsor” (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)). Applicants who select this option will complete a documented interview with members of the Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and World Language Education program in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. This evaluation will be conducted via a structured videoconference, using established instruments and procedures.

To be allowed to come to UGA as a J-1 scholar with no restrictions, scholars who select the interview option must demonstrate a level of English proficiency at or above Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, also described as a “threshold” proficiency level. If the scholar is assessed as demonstrating English language abilities below this level, he or she will be allowed to come to UGA only if the following conditions are met:

a) The scholar will be required to enroll in English language classes through UGA’s Intensive English Program. This enrollment must begin as soon as is practical given the scholar’s dates of travel and must continue either for the duration of the scholar’s academic program or until the scholar has successfully completed the Level 3 class in the Intensive English Program; and

b) The sponsoring department will certify that a capable interpreter, fluent in the scholar’s native language and in English, will be available to the scholar at all times. This certification must specify the interpreter’s training or abilities. It must also specify how the scholar’s communication needs will be supported during non-program times and in the case of emergency situations.

These conditions are required in order to ensure the scholar is able to successfully participate in the academic program, as required by State Department regulations.
Interview Fee:
The fee for the videoconference evaluation and certification of language abilities is $75.00, payable by the scholar to the Department of Language and Literacy Education before an interview will be scheduled. (Host departments/units may choose to reimburse the scholar for this expense, but it must be paid directly by the scholar initially.) In most cases, the evaluation and the assessment will be completed within five business days of a complete interview request submission. The fee for the Intensive English Program is $480 per class, including the registration fee. This cost may be paid by the scholar or by the hosting department/unit.

Scholars who select the interview option will begin with this link and then be guided through the processes of paying for, scheduling, and completing the interview: https://t.uga.edu/3uB

Intensive English Program:
More information about the Intensive English Program at UGA is found here: http://iep.uga.edu/

Contacts/Questions
Questions about this policy or about the English language proficiency regulations for J-1 visas:
Robin Catmur rcatmur@uga.edu, Director, Office of Immigration Services

Questions about procedures described above as Option 3, including the English proficiency interview evaluation process, fees, or scheduling:
Linda Harklau lharklau@uga.edu, Professor, Language and Literacy Education

Questions about UGA’s Intensive English Program:
Karen Braxley kbraxley@uga.edu, Director, UGA Intensive English Program