



## 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.

Acceptable English Proficiency Test	Minimum Score	Comparable Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
TOEFL IBT speaking test subscore	60 overall score; minimum Speaking sub-test score-17	B1
TOEIC (Speaking only--not general TOEIC)	Minimum Speaking score of 120	B1
IELTS speaking subtest band score	Minimum Speaking sub-test band score of 5.5	B1
Cambridge English: preliminary	Pass with minimum Speaking score of 140	B1
Cambridge English: first	Receive Cambridge English Certificate of B1; minimum Speaking score of 140	B1
Cambridge English: advanced	Pass	
Cambridge English: proficiency	Pass	
ACTFL: OPI	Intermediate Mid	B1



ACTFL: OPIC	Intermediate Mid	B1
-------------	------------------	----

**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 approved, certified English language school. The letter must indicate that the person completed a course of English language training at that institution, and:
  - o The letter must include the following statements: “Dr. XX has achieved a level of English ability sufficient to participate in the academic program at UGA and to function on a day-to-day basis. This level of English is equivalent to English proficiency at or above Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”.
  - o The letter must be issued on official letterhead, and signed by a **senior** academic administrator (ie: Dean or Registrar of the school, or equivalent).
- b) Documentation of having completed a degree at an institution or in a program where English was the language of instruction, or that the exchange visitor worked in an English-speaking environment at the institution (ie: teaching or conducting research in English). This letter also must be from a Dean or Registrar level position.

**Option 3: Interview (Mandatory if neither Option 1 nor 2 are possible)**

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. If the scholar receives an approval based on a videoconference interview with UGA’s College of Education within the last two years, we can accept that certificate as proof for subsequent visits, within that two-year time frame.

**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 with 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.**

**Process:**

When initiating the J-1 sponsorship, the sponsoring department will be asked which of the three methods of language assessment will be used. If Option 3, the interview assessment is selected, the scholar will receive an auto-email from the College of Education with links to schedule the interview at their convenience, and a link to the online fee payment site.

**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.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:lharklau@uga.edu)), Professor, Language and Literacy Education

Questions about UGA's Intensive English Program:

Karen Braxley ([kbraxley@uga.edu](mailto:kbraxley@uga.edu)), Director, UGA Intensive English Program