

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 must be documented in one of the following three ways:

- Test score
- Documentation from a previous institution
- Interview (mandatory if neither test score nor documentation are available)

Please see the following pages for more information about each option.

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
iTEP	3.0 for both speaking subset score and overall score	
Duolingo	60+ is acceptable.	

Option 2: Documentation from a Previous Institution

Federal regulations allow scholars to document their English language proficiency through “signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school” (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2)). There are two options for documenting English Proficiency in this manner. Please select one:

1. Did the scholar receive a degree from, or was the scholar employed at, a University or College where the method of instruction is/was English?
 - a. If yes, please provide a letter from the University or College documenting that the scholar has completed a degree at the 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 (i.e.: teaching or conducting research in English). The letter also must be signed by a Dean or Registrar level position.
 - b. If no, please select Option 3 – English Proficiency Interview.
2. Did the scholar complete English training from a certified English Language School?
 - a. If yes, please provide a letter from the English Language School confirming that the scholar completed a course of English language training at that institution, and:
 - i. 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”.
 - ii. The letter must be issued on official letterhead, and signed by a senior academic administrator such as the Dean or Registrar of the school, or the equivalent.
 - iii. The letter will be reviewed by Immigration Services for approval.
 - b. If no, please select Option 3 –English Proficiency Interview.

Option 3: Interview (Mandatory if neither Option 1 nor 2 is 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 “J-Check”, an English language assessment company.

This evaluation will be conducted via a structured videoconference, using established instruments and procedures. J-Check access is available from anywhere in the world, and the test can be taken 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The cost is \$88 per test for the scholar. There is no cost to the sponsoring department – though the department can choose to pay the interview fee on behalf of the scholar.

If the scholar receives an approval based on a videoconference interview with J-Check within the last three years, we can accept that certificate as proof for subsequent visits, within that three-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 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:

1. 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 academic program or until the scholar has successfully completed the Level 3 class in the Intensive English Program; and
2. 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.



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Further Information and Contacts

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:

Ashley Johnson (ashleyhj@uga.edu), Office of Immigration Services

Questions about UGA's Intensive English Program:

Laura Clark (ferclark8@uga.edu), Program Coordinator, UGA Intensive English Program