English Proficiency Requirement for J-1 Scholars

What is English Proficiency?

The U.S. Department of State, the government agency that has oversight of the Exchange Visitor Program, requires an Exchange Visitor (EV) to have sufficient proficiency in the English language. English proficiency must be determined by an objective measure to ensure that EV’s can successfully participate in their program, as well as on a day-to-day basis.

English language proficiency is a critical factor in an EV’s ability to succeed in the lab or classroom, and on a day-to-day basis. This includes everything from negotiating rent to describing an illness to a physician. Language proficiency is essential to the health, welfare, and safety of an EV, as well as a critical tool for an EV to fully understand their rights, responsibilities, and protections during their stay in the U.S.

General Guidelines - English proficiency must be demonstrated in one of the following ways:

1) Objective, recognized English language test:
The following tests are acceptable to fulfill the English proficiency requirement:
   - TOEFL - a score of 80 or higher on the iBT (internet based test) or 550 or higher on the PBT (paper-based exam)
   - IELTS - an overall minimum band score of 6.5 or higher
   - CEFR: Level of C1 or higher

   *All test dates must be within two years of receipt of the DS-2019 application to be valid.*

2) J-1 Interview conducted by English3: The “J-1 Interview” is a recorded interview completed through English3’s website. The interview generally takes about 25 minutes and is evaluated within 48 hours. A score of 3.0 or higher is required to demonstrate language proficiency. Click the following link for the English3 step-by-step instructions or go to English3’s website for direct access to the interview. *Please select the following: English Test - E3J1 (English3 J-1 Interview) for J-1 Exchange Visitors.*

3) If an EV can provide any of the following, they have satisfied the English proficiency requirements:
   - An Associate, Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree (completed within two years of the date the DS-2019 application) from a regionally-accredited U.S. college or university
   - A Bachelor’s degree or higher (completed within two years of the date the DS-2019 application) from an officially-recognized college or university in one of the following English speaking countries:
     - Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)
   - Native speakers of English who are citizens of Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Please Note: This policy is for J-1 Scholars only (Research Scholar, Professor, Short-term Scholar, Student Intern, and Specialist). For J-1 student information, please refer to the J-1 Student Policies and Forms.