English Proficiency for J-1 Exchange Visitors

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 is determined by an objective measure to ensure that EV’s may successfully participate in their program, and are able to function on a day-to-day basis.

English language proficiency is a critical factor in an Exchange Visitor’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.

English language proficiency can 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 we discussed including this option.
   *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, available to anyone with internet access. The duration of the interview generally takes about 25 minutes and evaluated within 48 hours. A score of 3 or higher is required to demonstrate language proficiency. Please click the following link to access English3’s J-1 Interview.

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 from a regionally-accredited U.S. college or university completed within two years of the date the DS-2019 application is received by ISSS.
   - A Bachelor’s degree or higher completed within two years of the date the DS-2019 application is received by ISSS from an officially-recognized college or university in one of the following English speaking countries:
     o 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)