



## New Language Proficiency Requirement for Visiting Scholars on J-1 Visas.

The Department of State (DOS) has established a new rule (effective January 2015) requiring English language proficiency for exchange visitors coming to the U.S. on J-1 visas. The DOS expects sponsors to ensure that exchange visitors have **“sufficient English proficiency to perform their jobs, navigate daily life in the United States, read and comprehend program materials, understand fully their responsibilities, rights, and protections, and know how to obtain assistance.”**

The new law requires sponsors to use one of the following objective measurements of English language proficiency:

- A recognized English language test;
- Signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school; or
- A documented interview either in-person or by videoconferencing (conducted by the GT Language Institute)

Sponsors must retain evidence of how they measured applicants’ English language proficiency so that it can be made available to the U.S. Department of State upon request.

**Scholars must identify a High Beginner level proficiency or greater to be eligible to participate in a J scholar program at Georgia Tech.**

The Georgia Institute of Technology will accept the following as a demonstration of English language proficiency for visiting scholars on J-1 visas:

- 1) A language proficiency test score using the Cambridge English grading scale such as an iBT TOEFL or IELTS demonstrating a **High Beginner level English** taken within the last two years.
- 2) Evidence of pursuit of an academic degree from an institution of higher education that was taught in English OR evidence of successful completion of an English training program. Evidence accepted includes a **transcript written in English** from a college, university or English language training program. **The transcript must document the grades earned, the grading scale and when documenting completion an English training program, the level of English proficiency achieved.** The scholar must also provide evidence that the language of instruction in the classroom was English when it is not written on the transcript or otherwise obvious.
- 3) A CV showing evidence of regular professional use of English along with a letter from an academic institution who employs you in a teaching or research position or a private industry employer documenting the position held regularly requires professional use of English to be successful.
- 4) Evidence of successful participation in an Exchange Visitor Program in the U.S. within the last two years. A letter from a previous J sponsor documenting the level of English proficiency held by the former scholar based on the Georgia Tech rubric (see pg. 3) is required.
- 5) A report showing at minimum a **High Beginner** level English on the Georgia Tech Proficiency Assessment conducted by the GT Language Institute or an authorized evaluator.

Prospective scholars who demonstrate, per the policy above, a High Beginner level of proficiency, are deemed eligible to participate in a J Exchange Program at Georgia Tech. All non-native English speakers are strongly encouraged to enroll in any of the short courses offered by the Language Institute to post-doctoral scholars and graduate students (at an affordable rate). Taking advantage of the Language Institute classes will allow scholars to improve academic and everyday English skills and enhance the exchange program. The host departments may cover the registration charge for enrolling in the Language Institute classes if the J Exchange Visitor’s financial sponsor will not cover the charge. <https://pe.gatech.edu/esl/esl-resources-for-georgia-tech/international-visiting-scholars-postdocs>

Language Institute Screening	iBT TOEFL	iBT TOEFL Speaking & Listening Subscores	IELTS	IELTS Speaking & Listening Subscores	CAE (Cambridge Advanced English) Grade, Level & Score	Requirements/ Recommendation based on score on language proficiency test
Beginner	<46		<4.0	<4.0	Grade: A Level: <B1 Score: <40	Needs additional ESL training before eligible to come to GT
High Beginner	46-52	11-13	4.0-4.5	4.0	Grade: B Level: B2 Score: 40-58	Strongly recommended to take Everyday Conversation course & additional Language Institute short courses upon arrival to GT
Intermediate	53-78	14- 19	5.0-6.0	5.5	Grade: C: Level: C1 or> Score: 58-66	Recommended to take Language Institute short courses
Advanced	>78	20 or >	6.5 or >	7.0 or >	Grade: A or B Level: C1 or> Score: 67-80	Encouraged to take Language Institute short courses

**Assessment Description:**

The Language Institute will provide an assessment of English language proficiency at the request of Georgia Tech department sponsors. The assessment can be arranged by submitting a request form with payment information. The assessment will be done online via WebEx and e-mail. Scholar must have a microphone and a webcam, and access to e-mail and the internet. The test will assess the following skills, with strongest emphasis on the oral interview. **The charge for administering the assessment can be paid by the host department OR the J scholar.** Two to three days following the assessment, a copy of the assessment report will be sent by the Language Institute to the sponsor, the Office of International Education, and the scholar.

**The GT Language assessment will take approximately 30-40 minutes and is comprised of:**

- Oral Interview
- Reading Comprehension Task
- Listening Comprehension Task

English Proficiency Assessment

	Advanced	Intermediate	High Beginner	Low Beginner
Grammatical Accuracy & Vocabulary Use	Exhibits strong control of grammar and vocabulary, making only occasional errors that do not interfere with intelligibility Rarely searches for words	Uses complex sentences but may exhibit unevenness in grammar that doesn't interfere with communication Sufficiently controls most vocabulary with some searching for words	Handles short sentences well and with some accuracy Able to talk about familiar topics, but has limited vocabulary, often searching for or misusing words.	Makes many errors, but some simple sentences may be correct Uses limited vocabulary, but has some command of basic vocabulary in field
Pronunciation	May have a non-native accent but is almost always comprehensible	Has non-native accent that occasionally hinders communication Generally uses stress, rhythm, and intonation effectively Has some problems with consonant and vowel sounds Omits some word endings but accurately pronounces the ones used	Has a considerable accent and may not always be comprehensible; requires close attention by listener Uses some stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns accurately Has several consonant and vowel sounds that are distracting to the listener, but does not interfere with understandability Omits some word endings and often mispronounces the ones used	Is somewhat difficult to understand and may require considerable attention by the listener Has problems with pausing, rhythm, stress, and/or intonation Has several consonant and vowel sounds that are distracting to the listener and occasionally interfere with understandability Omits most word endings
Communication of Ideas	Develops ideas logically and cohesively Uses examples and details effectively Paraphrases important ideas Answers questions with ease	Uses some sophisticated transitions to establish coherence Uses examples and details to clarify points May use some paraphrasing of important ideas Able to use language for more than conveying field-specific information and answer questions adequately.	Uses some transitions, mostly simple ones such as first, second... Ideas follow a logical order, but may leave out important information May use some examples to clarify points Has some difficulty conveying information outside field and answering questions.	Ideas sometimes follow a logical order but fall short of coherence Uses few, if any, transitions Presents information with underdeveloped or unclear support Has considerable difficulty conveying information outside of field or answering questions
Overall Fluency	Shows fluency and has command of English Sounds enthusiastic & confident Demonstrates concern about whether listener understands his/her speech Initiates conversation Seems able to converse confidently in both concrete and abstract scenarios	Has fluency but may speak hesitantly or too slowly/quickly Sounds relaxed and shows a little enthusiasm while presenting Might demonstrate slight concern about whether the listener understands his/her speech Sometimes initiates conversation	Has fluent delivery of erroneous English May exhibit a slight lack of confidence but is engaged in the topic Rarely initiates conversation Can converse about concrete ideas but has some difficulty talking about abstract ideas.	Has little fluency Seems nervous and reluctant to speak Never initiates conversation May frequently pause, hesitate, or repeat
Listening Comprehension	Is able to understand the overall message and details of an extended discourse on a wide variety of professional, academic, and every day topics.	Is able to understand main ideas and most supporting detail relating to everyday conversation and simple academic topics Is able to understand oral instructions	Is able to interpret most conversations in standard English Is able to identify the main idea of a short listening passage; may need to ask for clarification Is able to understand simple instructions when presented orally	Is able to understand only simple face to face conversation Is able to respond to commands or requests only after several repetitions

Overall Rating:

<b>Advanced</b> No additional language training required	<b>Intermediate</b> Additional language training available upon arrival to GT	<b>High Beginner</b> Required to take first available Everyday Conversation course upon arrival to GT	<b>Low Beginner</b> Additional English language training required before participating in J Exchange Program at Georgia Tech
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