

## Implementation of External English Language Interview Software for J-1 Exchange Visitors

This communication informs departments of a change to the J-1 English language proficiency interview process, and notes that as of May 8, departments should inform J-1 scholar candidates of the revised requirements. This process applies to new hires initiated after May 8.

### Background:

One of Georgia State's main avenues of visa sponsorship for international researchers is the J-1 status, administered by the Department of State. The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program has for many years required that "A prospective exchange visitor must have sufficient proficiency in the English language to undertake the anticipated program successfully." (9 FAM 402.5-6(G) (U) *Knowledge of English* (CT:VISA-1628; 09-13-2022))

A sponsor must verify an applicant's English language proficiency through a recognized English language test, by signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school, or through a documented interview conducted by the sponsor either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option." (22 CFR 62.10(a)(2))

For many years Georgia State University permitted department PIs and supervisors to conduct a documented interview to determine English language ability. However, the Office of International Students & Scholar Services (ISSS) has noted that some J-1 researchers do not possess the English language skills and proficiency to fully comprehend safety protocols and regulatory language used in campus labs. .... Other USG R1 institutions have an external interview process to help prevent these types of situations and ensure compliance and efficiency.

### Revised Process:

Effective May 15, ISSS will work with an external company, [E3](#), to facilitate the GSU J-1 interview process. Whether hosting a visiting scholar who is funding themselves or hiring a full-time employee, the offer and hiring process remains the same. Once the department (in consultation with ISSS as needed) determines that the J-1 is the appropriate visa status, the J-1 process can be initiated in iStart. During this process, the department will fill out an English Language Proficiency e-form, similar to the one currently in use. If the prospective scholar cannot provide Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (or equivalent) English language test scores or they cannot show documentation showing their attendance at a post-secondary school where English is the language of instruction. then the interview option must be selected.

At that time, an email will be sent to the prospective scholar to set up the E3 interview. The cost to the prospective scholar is \$99, to be paid before the interview. We recommend that the department inform the scholar to expect an email from E3 regarding the payment and interview.

E3 scores their interviews on a 5-point scale. A scholar must obtain at least a 3 (which states that their language ability is "adequate") on their E3 interview in order to proceed. Once the interview has occurred, it can take up to 5 days for E3 to email ISSS with the results. If they score less than 3, ISSS will inform the department that the scholar cannot be invited on a J-1 visa. If the scholar scores a 3 or higher, ISSS will issue DS-2019 for the J-1 visa interview.

Please contact Drew Webster of ISSS with questions.