

New Regulations for the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

The US Department of State has announced that effective January 5, 2015 new regulations require that a program sponsor must verify and document that a prospective J-1 exchange visitor possess sufficient proficiency in the English language to "successfully to participate in his or her program and to function on a day-to-day basis." The sponsor must make this determination by using an "objective measurement of English language proficiency," and must keep documentation on how the English language proficiency determination was made.

“The Department of State believes that not only is an exchange visitor’s success in his or her particular program dependent upon sufficient English language capability, but that good English communication skills are essential to function on a day-to-day basis and to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of exchange visitor.”

Under the new regulation all hosting departments must verify an applicant’s English language proficiency through **one of 3 methods:**

1. A recognized English language test (TOEFL or IELTS) or
2. Signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school or
3. A documented interview conducted by the hosting department either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option.

If a new scholar takes the English language test the minimum scores are as follows:

TOEFL

- **85** IBT (internet Test)
- **225** CBT (Computer Test)
- **565** PBT (Paper Test)

IELTS

Original IELTS Report: minimum score **6.5** bandwidth

HEALTH INSURANCE CHANGES

(Effective May 15, 2015)

These health insurance requirements apply to J-1 visitors and their J-2 dependents.

	Current Requirement	New Requirement 05/15/2015
Medical benefits	\$50,000	\$100,000
Repatriation of remains	\$7,500	\$25,000
Medical evacuation	\$10,000	\$50,000
Deductible per accident or illness	\$500	\$500