

## **English Proficiency Evaluation**

Use the questions below in order to evaluate the English proficiency of the prospective J-1 scholar through an interview. The interview must be a minimum of 15 minutes and must be conducted either in person or over videoconference or telephone. The interviewer should use only English while speaking to the prospective J-1 scholar. The interviewer should explain that they will ask a series of questions that must be answered in English and that the prospective J-1 scholar will be given a rating of 1 through 5 (with 5 being highest) based on this evaluation and that record of English proficiency is required by the U.S. Department of State.

### **Questions**

**\*Ask at least one from each category.**

- 1) Warm-up: (Note to interviewer: explain that the answer to this question will not be scored.)
  - a) Tell me about your family.
  - b) Tell me about your hobbies.
  - c) Tell me about your favorite professor.
  
- 2) Getting Assistance: (Note to interviewer: explain that answers from this point forward will be scored.)
  - a) Tell me about a time you became ill. How did you obtain assistance?
  - b) Tell me about a time you were locked out of your home/car/office. How did you obtain assistance?
  
- 3) J-1 Program Activities/Duties:
  - a) Tell me what you know about research and/or higher education in the U.S. What do you hope to learn?
  - b) Tell me what you know about American culture and society. What do you hope to learn?
  
- 4) Daily Life in the U.S.:
  - a) If you are given the opportunity to come to Penn, how would you establish your life? For example, how would you find a place to live and how would you get to and from work?
  - b) Describe how you keep healthy and/or manage stress in your daily life. How do you plan continue to do this if you come to the U.S.?
  
- 5) Reading and Comprehension of J-1 Program Materials: (Note to interviewer: it is understood that the potential scholar may not be familiar with the J-1 process; however, their ability to understand the process if chosen must be evaluated.)
  - a) If you are invited to come to Penn, what resources will you use to learn about the visa process?
  - b) If you have traveled or lived in another country please describe how you received permission to do so.
  
- 6) Understanding Rights, Responsibilities, and Protections:
  - a) How many hours do you expect to work per week in the U.S.? What would you do with your free time?
  - b) How much vacation time do you expect to receive in the U.S.? What would you do with your vacation time?
  
- 7) Question Formulation: (Note to interviewer: this is needed in order to evaluate ability to formulate a question.)
  - a) Please ask me two questions on any topic.

### **Evaluating Proficiency**

Use the below scale to evaluate the prospective J-1 scholar. A level of 3.5-5 is considered successful and a level of 1-3 is considered unsuccessful. Levels are based on the *ETS Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) Test*.

Level*	Characteristics of Communication
1	<b><i>Impossible to understand</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not understand questions</li> <li>Attempts at English incomprehensible</li> </ul>
2	<b><i>Nearly impossible to understand</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few words are intelligible</li> <li>Speech contains mostly sentence fragments, repetition of vocabulary, and simple phrases</li> </ul>
3	<b>Possible to understand, although often repetition is needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major or minor grammatical errors</li> <li>Communication sometimes affected by errors, but speech can generally be understood</li> </ul>
4	<b>Easy to understand</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Errors not unusual, but rarely major</li> <li>Communication generally not affected by errors</li> </ul>
5	<b>Communication is effortless</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Errors not noticeable and accent not distracting</li> <li>Delivery often has native-like smoothness</li> </ul>

\*Half scores are acceptable (for example, 4.5)