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English Language Proficiency

Sponsoring Units or implementers must verify that a participant is proficient in English if the participant will undertake a U.S.-based training program that is conducted in English. This verification is required for programmatic reasons and also for J-1 visa eligibility unless an interpreter is to accompany the participant. Even if accompanied by an interpreter, the participant must have sufficient English language skills to understand and respond to basic questions at the port of entry.

In certain cases, a participant may not initially have sufficient proficiency in English to undertake an academic program in the U.S. However, if the academic program includes English language instruction sufficient to prepare the participant for the rest of the program, the Sponsoring Unit may approve the participant for the program based on the fact that the participant will acquire the necessary proficiency during a period of initial English language instruction.

This is consistent with [9 FAM 41.61 PN3\(b\)](#), which indicates that if the program sponsor is aware of a deficiency in English, the participant can still be eligible to participate in the program so long as the academic institution indicates a willingness to accept the participant into the program and to resolve the deficiency. In this situation, the Sponsoring Unit must require the academic institution to have stringent procedures to ensure adequate English proficiency for the completion of the program and such procedures must be approved in advance by the Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) or other appropriate USAID official. If it becomes evident that a participant is unlikely to complete the program successfully due to an English deficiency, the academic institution must notify the Sponsoring Unit for possible termination of the program.

Sponsoring Units must designate the party responsible for assessing competency in English. The training activity's CTO, or other appropriate USAID official may approve a waiver or exemption of the language verification requirement on a case-by-case basis.

a. English language testing waiver/exemption

Participants require no testing and are presumed competent in English for sponsored study in the U.S. if their secondary and post-secondary education was conducted in English or, if in the 10 years preceding USAID-sponsored enrollment, they completed an academic degree taught in English in the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or another facility teaching in English deemed appropriate by the Sponsoring Unit. The CTO for the training activity or other responsible designee makes this determination on a case-by-case basis. The CTO may also determine whether to exempt from testing individuals who have published a minimum of five documents in

English or who have made a minimum of five presentations in English. Finally, the CTO may determine to delegate all waiver/exemption decisions to the implementer. In this case, the CTO must notify the implementer in writing of the determination.

b. Verification

For those participants not presumed competent in English, Sponsoring Units or implementers must verify English language proficiency based on prescribed scores on one of the following tests:

(1) For academic programs:

- The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is generally required by the admitting institution. Testing schedules and materials are available from Educational Testing Services Inc., Princeton, NJ 08541, Tel. (609) 921-9000.
- If TOEFL is not specifically required, the Sponsoring Unit may use the American Language Institute/Georgetown University (ALIGU) English Proficiency Test (EPT), which has been distributed to all Missions.

(2) For technical programs at academic institutions that do not lead to a degree or degree programs in which a high level of reading and writing skills are required, the Sponsoring Unit must ensure that one of the following tests is administered:

- The American Language Institute/Georgetown University (ALIGU) English Proficiency Test (EPT); or
- The State Department's Test of English Language Proficiency (TELP), available from the U.S. Embassy in the respective country (a test developed by the former United States Information Agency)

(3) For short-term courses and conferences, Sponsoring Units must administer the ALIGU Communicative English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) test, distributed to all Missions, or any other test the Sponsoring Unit designates as being appropriate for the program.

* All English language tests used for USAID-sponsored participants are valid for 12 months. Any decision on whether to raise or reduce the passing score must be made by the CTO, Sponsoring Unit, or individual delegated the authority to make English language assessments.

c. Interpreters and technical escorts

Sponsoring Units and implementers must **not** assign participants who know English duties as collateral interpreters or technical escorts while they are in participant status, as they are not trained in interpreter or technical escort skills and it detracts from their full participation in the training program.

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