Defense Language Institute English Language Center

Non-Resident OPI

Testing Guidelines

October 2024

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1 . REFERENCES

    (a) DLIELC Instruction 1025.9, Oral Proficiency Interview Program Guidelines, October 13, 2011 (hereby superseded).

    (b) AFJI 16-103, Managing the Defense English Language Program, August 31, 1994.

    (c) AFI 16-105, Joint Security Cooperation Education and Training Regulation, January 3, 2011.

    (d) DLIELC Instruction 1025.15, English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test Guidelines, 1 July 2017 (hereby superseded).

2. PURPOSE

Under the authority of references (b)-(d), these guidelines prescribe policies and procedures governing scheduling, administration, scoring and release of scores for the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) resident campus testing program.

3. APPLICABILITY

These guidelines apply to all Security Cooperation Offices (SCOs) and all services or agencies responsible for the selection of International Military Students (IMS) to attend International Military Education and Training, Foreign Military Sales or other security assistance sponsored training. It also applies to services or agencies using the OPI test for the selection, placement, or reclassification of US military personnel or for determination of their English language competency for specific courses or jobs. Additionally, US Air Force exercise planners may use the test to determine the eligibility of international participants in flying exercises.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. After-hours OPIs. OPIs conducted either before or after the normal duty hours of OPI raters.

4.2. Authorized In-Country (IC)/Continental United States (CONUS) Representatives. SCOs or US personnel with SCO responsibilities, English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test Control Officers (TCOs) and Alternate Test Control Officers (ATCOs) or US Government personnel (e.g., Reserve Officer Training Corps [ROTC] or Military Entrance Processing Stations [MEPS] guidance counselors) designated to coordinate and monitor nonresident OPIs.

4.3. C/S. The format for reporting OPI Listening Comprehension (C) and Speaking (S) scores based on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level descriptions (Encl E1). Example score: C/S of 2+/2.

4.4. English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test. Department of Defense (DoD) test for assessing listening and reading proficiency in English (Ref d). The term ECL also refers to the test score: an ECL score.

4.5. Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Language Skill Level Descriptions. The comprehension and speaking scale against which a candidate's OPI linguistic performance is evaluated, herein referred to as ILR SLDs. These language level descriptors agreed upon by USG agencies and mandated for use by DoD organizations. https://www.govtilr.org/index.htm

4.6. Nonresident OPI. An OPI conducted for a candidate who is not physically on the DLIELC campus, or for a candidate who is not currently enrolled as a student at the DLIELC resident campus. The interview is conducted either via Zoom, or over the telephone.

4.7. Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). A test of a candidate's interactive listening comprehension and speaking proficiency, conducted under controlled conditions by two certified OPI raters.

4.8. OPI Coordinator. The Education Assistant appointed by the Chief of Testing responsible for the daily operations, including interview scheduling and score tracking and dissemination, of the DLIELC OPI program.

4.9. OPI Rater. A resident DLIELC GS-1701 staff member who has been trained and certified to conduct OPIs and assign ratings based on the Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptors.

4.10. OPI Rater Trainer. An OPI rater who has been trained and certified to conduct OPI training certification for raters and verifiers, perform quality assurance performance checks, verify ratings, and perform recertification observations for raters.

4.11. OPI Rating. The ILR-based rating used to describe a candidate's linguistic performance during an OPI. At DLIELC, the highest score a candidate can achieve is a 3/3.

4.12. OPI Rating Verification. The review of a recorded OPI by an OPI verifier and/or rater trainer to ensure rating accuracy and rater reliability.

4.13. OPI Verifier. An OPI rater who has been trained to verify ratings of recorded OPIs and to assist with quality assurance measures.

4.14. Resident OPI. An OPI conducted via Zoom, or over the telephone, for an individual who is physically on the DLIELC campus and currently enrolled in a course on the DLIELC resident campus.

4.15. Telephonic OPI. An OPI conducted via Zoom, or over the telephone in which the candidate has his/her camera on and the rating team has their cameras off.

4.16. Face-to-Face OPI. An OPI conducted via Zoom in which all participants, candidate and rater team, have their cameras on.

4.17. OPI Virtual Testing Team (VTT). One or more teams of OPI raters who are assigned to do a series of short suspense, high demand OPIs for a particular country or purpose.

5. POLICY

5.1. Nonresident OPI Scheduling.

5.1.1. Candidates must attain the required ECL score before they can be scheduled for an OPI. The ECL score must be within the 180-day validity period of when the OPI is conducted.

5.1.2. Countries that are exempt from in-country ECL testing, but not exempt from in-country OPI testing, may use the American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) in lieu of the ECL.

5.1.3. For OPI scheduling purposes, DLIELC honors exceptions to policy for ECL requirements which are granted by a competent Security Cooperation Education and Training Program (SCETP) authority (normally a schoolhouse/MILDEP), the office of primary responsibility (OPR) for military service directives, or the sponsoring MAJCOM for US military exercises.

5.1.4. Nonresident candidates who have taken a telephonic OPI must wait 90 days before being re-interviewed unless a waiver is granted by DLIELC/Testing. Waivers will be considered only if the candidate is enrolled in an English language training program that stresses oral language acquisition. Waivers will not be granted before a 30-day wait- period has elapsed.

5.1.5. Candidates who fail their nonresident OPI before entry to DLIELC must pass their verification ECL and be in class for at least 30 days before they can be scheduled for a resident OPI.

5.1.6. Candidates who had instruction and took a resident OPI at the DLIELC campus but did not meet the required score before leaving the DLIELC campus are required to wait at least 90 days before being re-interviewed. Waivers will normally not be granted in these cases.

5.1.7. Puerto Rico Army ROTC will schedule Spring and Fall VTTs every year and maximize the use of this time for the OPI testing of their candidates.

5.1.8. Puerto Rico Army ROTC may schedule up to four OPIs per month total for all test sites combined during months that do not have a VTT scheduled.

5.1.9. DLIELC allows an OPI for 1 candidate per Worksheet Control Number (WCN). A secondary candidate can be scheduled only if the primary candidate fails the OPI or if the primary candidate becomes unable to participate in the scheduled training.

5.1.10. After-hours OPIs will be scheduled when requested by a country at a time determined by Testing based on manning requirements and availability of personnel.

5.1.11. For military exercises or in any other cases where MAJCOM guidance has not defined a minimum ECL score and allows OPI testing in lieu of the required ECL score, DLIELC will OPI test candidates within 5 points of the required ECL score.

5.1.12. All nonresident OPIs, to include MTT/VTT interviews for IMSs, scheduled for aviation follow-on-training (FOT), excluding loadmasters, are conducted telephonically.

5.1.13. Zoom Requirements for OPI Candidates

5.1.13.1. Internet capable device with camera, microphone, and reliable internet connection.

5.1.13.2. A quiet room where he/she will be alone for the entire interview.

5.1.13.3. An original, official, government issued identification with the candidate's name in Roman letters which can be read by our English-speaking raters. Photocopies or digital copies of identification are not acceptable.

5.1.13.4. A pen/pencil and blank piece of paper to be used only when instructed by the rater team.

5.1.13.5. All other devices including but not limited to computers, smartphones, and smart watches must be turned off during the interview.

5.1.13.6. Candidate will have only Zoom open during the interview; use of any other program, application, or resource to include but not limited to AI tools or transcription is prohibited.

5.1.13.7. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in the cancellation of the interview. Rescheduling may or may not be prompt enough to meet candidate's target test window before training starts, depending on the volume of requests on the schedule.

5.2. OPI Administration.

5.2.1. All OPIs must be proctored.

5.2.1.1. For OPIs where the candidate does not have access to an internet connected device with a camera, a US military officer or noncommissioned officer (NCO) in the rank of E-5 or above, or a US Government Civil Service employee in the grade of GS-05 or above, or the equivalent will be the proctor.

5.2.1.2. For OPIs where the candidate has access to an internet connected device with a camera, the candidate must leave the camera on for the duration of the test and the OPI raters will proctor.

5.2.1.3. OPI interviews are conducted and verified by DLIELC OPI-certified personnel only. Ratings are assigned by applying the same ILR-based standards (Encl E1) to resident, nonresident, face-to-face and telephonic interviews alike.

5.2.2. All nonresident and resident interviews for IMSs scheduled for aviation follow-on training (FOT), excluding loadmasters, are conducted telephonically.

5.2.3. All OPIs will normally be digitally recorded.

5.2.4. Raters Conducting Resident and Nonresident Interviews.

5.2.4.1. All OPIs are conducted by a team of two OPI-certified raters. Ratings are assigned by applying the same Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) based standards to resident, nonresident, face-to-face, and telephonic interviews alike.

5.2.4.2. Raters conducting after-hour OPIs are entitled to compensation of 2 hours per day in the form of either overtime pay or compensatory time off.

5.2.5. Maintenance of Program Quality Assurance.

5.2.5.1. Verifications of OPIs will be conducted IAW guidelines established by the Chief of Testing and the OPI Program Manager.

5.2.5.2. All required rating verifications must be completed before ratings are officially recorded or scores released.

5.2.5.3. Official rating may only be changed if either a verifier and rater trainer or two rater trainers have independently reviewed and rated the recorded OPI and declare the initial rating inaccurate In such cases, only the official score will be modified. The independent, pre-negotiated ratings assigned by the original team will remain unchanged.

5.2.5.4. In the event the OPI raters cannot agree on the rating, the recording will be reviewed and rated by a rater trainer. If the sample is deemed un-ratable by the rater trainer, the candidate will be re-interviewed by another team of raters. The rater trainer will be the final arbiter of the score.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. Testing will:

6.1.1. Exercise overall responsibility of the OPI program, coordinate all OPI policy changes, and serve as the office of record for all official OPIs.

6.1.2. Authorize on a case-by-case basis any waivers for DLIELC OPI requirements regarding testing security, such as testing procedures, and/or frequency.

6.1.3. Ensure OPI quality assurance through documentation/recording review, trend data analysis, and statistical analysis and initiate actions necessary to maintain and improve program quality.

6.2. The OPI Coordinator will:

6.2.1. Coordinate the scheduling of nonresident telephonic OPIs with appropriate IC/CONUS representatives.

6.2.2. Maintain a calendar of nonresident OPIs.

6.2.3. Form OPI teams to conduct all OPIs including after-hours OPIs.

6.2.4. Promptly refer OPIs for verification as needed and ensure that they are accomplished as required.

6.2.5. Ensure all required OPI information is entered into the OPI database.

6.3. OPI Raters will:

6.3.1. Use prescribed guidelines to elicit and independently rate a ratable speech sample from the candidate, negotiating final score as necessary.

6.3.2. Document interview profile in either the OPI database or on the OPI Profile PDF and submit it to the OPI Resident workflow email for processing.

6.3.3. OPI verifiers and rater trainers will review recorded interviews as required and inform the OPI Coordinator of verification results.

6.4. Authorized IC/CONUS Representative will:

6.4.1. Identify ECL-qualified personnel who have an OPI requirement and schedule OPIs through the DLIELC OPI office, using the OPI Request Form at least 15 US business days in advance of the target test date.

6.4.2. Immediately notify the DLIELC OPI Coordinator of any cancellations or changes in scheduled OPI appointments.

6.4.3. Applicable to OPIs when the candidate is unable to use an internet capable device with a camera: Observe the required test protocol included in the appointment confirmation message to include but not limited to; remaining in the room with candidate for the duration of the interview, maintaining test security, verifying the candidate's identity with a valid, government issued ID, taking possession of and turning of the candidate's electronics, and prohibiting the candidate from using writing utensils until instructed by the OPI Rater team.

6.4.4. Inform the candidate of the requirements for Zoom OPIs and ensure the candidate has the login information and will login at the required time of 10 min before the scheduled appointment time.

7.   PROCEDURES

7.1. Scheduling Nonresident OPIs.

7.1.1. The IC/CONUS requesting official will:

7.1.1.1. Confirm that the candidate's proposed training has an OPI requirement, and that the candidate has already met the ECL requirement. ECL-exempt countries may provide a qualifying American Language Course Placement Test score in lieu of an ECL score.

7.1.1.2. Make every effort to request OPIs at least 15 US business days in advance of the target interview date and schedule no more than two OPIs from the same organization on the same day.

7.1.1.3. Completely fill out an online OPI request 332 TRS Form 5, OPI Request, available from the DLIELC website or from the OPI Coordinator via email and send it as an email attachment to dlielc.332trs.etfnropi@us.af.mil for processing.

7.1.1.4. Request a VTT to accommodate high volume and/or short suspense OPI requests, defined as 10 or more requests for a single course, joint exercise, or other program. OPI VTTs will be scheduled at dates and times that accommodate DLIELC Testing manpower availability. OPI VTTs will be requested at least 30 days before the required VTT start date.

7.1.2. The OPI Coordinator will:

7.1.2.1. Monitor the scheduled nonresident OPIs and the OPI teams on duty and inform the OPI raters of any changes or cancellations.

7.1.2.2. Coordinate the scheduling of requested OPIs with IC/CONUS representatives, emailing them a confirmation of the interview date and time along with the Zoom information and protocol to be followed on the day of the test. Whenever possible, interviews are scheduled during the normal DLIELC workday. Interviews are scheduled on a first come, first served basis.

7.1.2.3. Enter all required information in the OPI database.

7.2. Nonresident Testing Procedures.

7.2.1. The IC/CONUS test proctor will:

7.2.1.1. For phone OPIs ensure that the candidate arrives prior to the scheduled time and place for the OPI and confirm identity through official photo identification. Proctor should log candidate in 10 min prior to OPI start time.

7.2.1.2. For Zoom OPIs, ensure that the candidate has a copy of the Zoom login information and will login 10 min prior to the scheduled OPI start time.

7.2.1.3. The maximum allowable wait time for the candidate to login will be up to 10 min past the scheduled start time. If the candidate is not present or if a good connection cannot be established by that time, the OPI will be cancelled and rescheduled.

7.2.1.4. Ensure that OPI candidates turn off cellphones/electronic devices and relinquish them along with any writing material, pens, pencils, and books they might have with them to the proctor's control for the duration of the OPI.

7.2.2. The OPI Coordinator will:

7.2.2.1. Verify with the IC/CONUS representative or candidate that the sound quality is sufficient to begin the telephonic OPI, and request that the IC/CONUS representative call back if there is a bad connection. No more than two call-backs are allowed per scheduled OPI.

7.2.2.2. Ensure that the Zoom recording is active.

7.2.2.3. Inform IC/CONUS representative if candidate is not logged in at least 5 min prior to the scheduled OPI start time.

7.2.2.4. Inform IC/CONUS representative at 10 min past the appointment time that the OPI is cancelled and may be rescheduled due to candidate no-show or inability to establish a good connection.

7.2.3. The OPI Raters will:

7.2.3.1. Report any sound quality, connection, or telephone issues to the OPI Coordinator as soon as they happen.

7.2.3.2. Pause the interview if it has been suspected or determined that a candidate has been using outside resources (e.g., notes, books, electronic resources, cell phone, AI tools, etc.) and report immediately to the OPI Coordinator, who will then decide on the necessary course of action.

7.2.3.3. Request through the OPI Coordinator that a rater trainer resolve unusual situations or disputes with ratings.

7.2.3.4. In the event the OPI raters cannot agree on the rating, the recording will be reviewed and rated by a rater trainer. If the sample is deemed un-ratable by the rater trainer, the candidate will be re-interviewed by another team of raters. The rater trainer will be the final arbiter of the score.

7.2.3.5. Independently rate candidates IAW ILR SLDs, compare independent ratings and negotiate an official rating.

7.2.3.6. After negotiating a score, enter their original, pre-negotiated ratings in addition to the official, negotiated score and complete the required rating justification information in the OPI database or on the OPI Profile PDF.

7.3. Release of Scores.

7.3.1. The OPI Coordinator will email IC/CONUS representatives the official OPI score. This email will serve as the official score report and whenever possible will be sent within two US business days of the interview.

7.3.2. The IC/CONUS Representative will inform the host country or appropriate CONUS personnel of the candidate's OPI rating.

7.3.3. IC representatives will add the OPI rating and date of interview on the invitational travel order (ITO) and Security Assistance Network (SAN) Web.

7.3.4. OPI scores are valid for 180 days from the date of the test.

8. REVIEW AND SIGNATORIES

8.1. This directive shall be reviewed annually or upon changes to governing directives.

8.2. The OPR for this directive is the DLIELC Testing Branch Chief. Please direct questions/inquiries to dli.testing@us.af.mil, Commercial: 210-671-4889 or DSN: (312) 473-7567.

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