

DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL

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Lori Gruebel
Commissioner

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ORAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION POLICY

As part of the examination administration for certain designated titles, the Rockland County Department of Personnel (hereinafter “the Department of Personnel”) has developed the following policy as it relates to the qualifying foreign language oral proficiency examination (hereinafter “oral proficiency exam”). The oral proficiency exam is designed to evaluate a candidate's oral proficiency in the foreign language, at the level appropriate for the title being filled. Oral proficiency levels I through III are determined by evaluating the following factors: grammar, vocabulary, fluency and content as follows:

- Level I proficiency: requires that the incumbent be able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements; can handle most social situations, including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family and autobiographical information; can provide instructions on routine, concrete matters; can translate routine correspondence and documents with the aid of a dictionary and/or grammar book; can get gist of most conversations on non-technical subjects, and has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though faulty, is intelligible; can read with general accuracy news items on non-technical topic and general correspondence.
- Level II proficiency: requires that the incumbent be able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics not requiring specialized vocabulary (e.g. technical engineering, medicine, etc.); can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence in general terms with reasonable ease; possesses adequate comprehension to normal rate of speech; has good control of grammar and errors do not interfere with understanding; can read with understanding standard newspaper, correspondence and official documents.
- Level III proficiency: requires that the incumbent be able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs; can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of their own personal and professional experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary; can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations; can handle informal translation from and into the language with occasional use of a dictionary and/or grammar book; can readily read difficult prose intended for the general reader, and specialized materials in their own area of expertise.

Candidates must pass both the written examination¹ and the qualifying oral proficiency exam in order to be eligible for appointment. In most instances, the oral proficiency exam is administered after a candidate's nomination for appointment to the position.

Oral proficiency examinations will be scheduled and administered by the Department of Personnel. The Department of Personnel will notify candidates of their scheduled appointment date, time and location by email notification. It is imperative that candidates make sure that their contact information, including email address, has been correctly and accurately reported to the Department of Personnel. Candidates are directed to submit a Name/Address Change Form immediately of any change to contact information. The Name/Address Change Form is available at: <http://rocklandgov.com/departments/personnel/>.

All oral proficiency exams are recorded and rated on a pass-fail basis. The oral proficiency exam is administered at the highest level of proficiency and a candidate's proficiency is evaluated (or assigned a rating) against that standard. The qualifying oral language proficiency exam will be waived for candidates who have previously passed an oral proficiency exam at the required proficiency level given under the direction of Department of Personnel or in any local jurisdiction in New York State. If a candidate wishes to waive the oral portion of the exam, a request must be submitted in writing within thirty (30) days of the written test to the Department of Personnel indicating the title, number of the test and the jurisdiction for which it was held. If the oral proficiency exam was administered in or for a jurisdiction outside of Rockland County, the waiver request must provide original documentation from the testing agency that provides the following information: Examination/Test date and (name of language) Language Oral Proficiency Level attained. A determination as to comparability will be made by the Department of Personnel and the candidate will receive written notification once the determination is made.

Those who receive written notification of failing the oral proficiency exam may make a request in writing within ten (10) for a retest. The Department of Personnel reserves the right to offer one (1) retest to all those candidates who failed or failed to appear for the first oral language proficiency test. Retests will not be scheduled until all passing candidates have been given an opportunity for testing. Candidates who fail the oral language exam may request a review of their oral proficiency exam results within thirty (30) days of receipt of the failure notification. The review is scheduled and administered by the Department of Personnel and will include permitting the candidate to review the examiner's ratings and comments. Additionally, the candidate may request to review of the audio recording of their oral proficiency exam. Candidates are not permitted to bring anyone with them to the review. If, after reviewing the examiner's ratings and audio recording, the candidate believes that there was a substantial or manifest error or mistake in the administration or scoring of the oral proficiency exam, the candidate may submit a written appeal to the Department of Personnel. Upon appeal, a candidate's score will be changed only if the Commissioner of Personnel or designee determines that a manifest error or mistake in the administration or scoring occurred during the course of the oral proficiency exam in question.

Candidates are expected to make every effort to participate in the oral proficiency exam on the scheduled date. However, it is the policy of the Department of Personnel to provide an alternate examination date to those candidates who are unable to appear on the scheduled test date due to emergencies or scheduling conflicts beyond their control. Candidates seeking an alternate examination date should refer to the Department of Personnel's Alternate Examination Date Policy for additional information. A candidate will be removed from the eligible list for declining to attend the oral proficiency exam appointment with no approved alternate test date request or failing to appear on the scheduled date and time.

¹ The written examination may consist of a written multiple-choice examination in English or a written questionnaire that asks candidates to provide information about their education, training and/or work experience, which must be completed in English.