

## Language Competency Assessment at the University Level

**Question:** How are students assessed to determine what level of language they are ready to enroll in at WWU? Are there placement tests; if so, are the tests developed here at Western? Are there any kinds of state guidelines on these?

**Answer** (from Shaw Gynan, Spanish, WWU): We don't have a placement test. Our rule of thumb is that a year of high school equals a quarter of study at Western. Thus, three years of high school will get a student placed in 201. Only rarely does a student place out of the 200-level of Spanish. Students place themselves or upon receiving advice from faculty. In the case of a misplacement, we generally allow students to switch up (or more typically down) to another level if they feel the course is not suited to their needs.

**Other info on “proficiency”:** The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed guidelines for assessment of foreign language proficiency some years back. There are six levels, Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, Distinguished, and Native. “Advanced” corresponds to the Foreign Service Institute’s “Working Proficiency”, which is only level 2. So, a series of meetings was held and the 0-2 levels were broken up into seven levels.

Just to give you an idea of the difficulty of measuring oral proficiency, our graduating seniors, even after foreign study and all our drilling, are good if they reach Advanced, and many don't. Students who complete first year should but often don't have Level 1-, Low Intermediate, and completion of the entire 200 level sequence will enable a student to bump up only to Intermediate. Many of our students get stuck at intermediate high and never move beyond that in the 300 and 400 level.

This is not an indictment of our language teaching, but rather the nature of the scale.

Most placement tests don't even deal with oral proficiency, but reading and grammar skills. I believe our approach is flexible and pragmatic, global and realistic, and thus serves our program well.

There is, of course, a lot on the web about this. Here is an oral proficiency reference:

<http://www.govtilr.org/Skills/ILRscale2.htm>

**Question:** Do you know if anyone other than just admissions people is ever involved in determining whether prospective students have completed a language requirement? So if someone doesn't have two years of language, but they are, say, a hearing child of deaf parents or a heritage speaker of Spanish, then who decides whether they have met the requirement? Are the language faculty ever involved in that kind of assessment? Are there state admissions guidelines about other ways to meet the requirement?

**Answer:** No to all of this. Language faculty are never consulted. I assume the admissions folks do this on their own.

## Foreign Language Requirements at Selected Washington Universities

**Central Washington University-** *Entrance:* Students with fewer than 40 credits must complete the foreign language requirement which is satisfied by one year of a single foreign language at the college-level (through 103) or two years of a single foreign language at the high school. Students with 40 credits or more or an AA/AS (DTA) are not held to the foreign language requirement for admissions. *Graduation:* All students seeking the Bachelor of Arts Degree must complete one year (through 103) of college-level foreign language prior to graduation from CWU. Students who transfer to CWU with a DTA and pursue a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Fine Arts or Bachelor of Arts in Education degrees do not have to meet the foreign language requirement.

**Eastern Washington University-** *Entrance:* Transfer students with 40 college credits or more at time of matriculation do not need to meet the foreign language requirement as an entrance requirement. Transfer students with fewer than 40 college credits at the time of matriculation must meet the same foreign language requirement that pertain to high school students (either 2 years in high school or one year in college/through 103). *Graduation:* Foreign language is an exit requirement for all Bachelor of Arts degrees except: BA Business, BA Education and BFA (Bachelors of Fine Arts). Foreign language is not a requirement for any BS degree.

**The Evergreen State College-** <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>Transfer students who have completed the AA/AS are not required to take any foreign language. If they are transferring with fewer than 40 transferable credits, however, they must have completed 2 years of foreign language in high school (or through 102 at college-level).

**Pacific Lutheran University-** *Entrance:* Two years of one foreign language in high school, with an average grade of C or higher, or one year at the college level (through 103), or demonstrated equivalent proficiency. Students who have not satisfied this requirement may still be admitted to the university but they may not graduate without completing the foreign language requirements as an additional degree requirement. *Graduation:* In addition to meeting the entrance requirement in foreign language students in the College of Arts and Sciences must meet additional foreign language requirements. Please contact advisor for requirements.

**Seattle Pacific University-** <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>Students must have three years of a single foreign language in high school or a full year in college (through 103) will be required for graduation. Students who enter SPU with an AA do not need to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

**Seattle University-** *Entrance:* Transfer students with 45 college credits (or more) do

not need to meet the foreign language requirement as an entrance requirement. Transfer students with fewer than 45 college credits must have two years of high school foreign language or 2 college quarters (must be the same foreign language). Graduation: The College of Arts and Sciences requires one-year proficiency or foreign language through 103 in order to graduate.

**University of Puget Sound-** Entrance: No foreign language requirement for admissions.<sup>[L][T][L]</sup><sup>[SEP][SEP]</sup>Graduation: For graduation from Puget Sound, a student must satisfy the Foreign Language Graduation Requirement by at least one of the following:

Successfully completing two semesters of a foreign language at the 101-102 college level, or one semester of a foreign language at the 200 level or above (Courses taken pass/fail will not fulfill the Foreign Language Graduation Requirement.);

Passing a Puget Sound-approved foreign language proficiency exam at the third-year high school or first-year college level;

Receiving a score of 4 or 5 on an Advanced Placement foreign language exam or a score of 5, 6, or 7 on an International Baccalaureate Higher Level foreign language exam;

Qualifying for a waiver on the grounds of a documented learning disability that affects the ability to process language.

**University of Washington (Seattle)-** Entrance: Minimum Admission Requirement: Two years of a single foreign language in high school or two quarters in college.<sup>[L][T][L]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup>Recommended for Transfer: For Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Social Work, a third quarter of college-level (103 w/ a 2.0) foreign language.<sup>[L][T][L]</sup><sup>[SEP][SEP]</sup>Graduation: For Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Social Work, a third quarter of college-level (103 w/ a 2.0) foreign language is required to graduate from the University of Washington. The Colleges of Architecture, Business Administration, Engineering, Forest Resources, Nursing, Fisheries, Sciences, and Public Health do not require a third year.

**University of Washington (Tacoma)-** Entrance: Two years of a single foreign language in high school or two quarters in college. Graduation: For the International Business Concentration within Business Administration, a third quarter of college-level (103) foreign language is required otherwise no further foreign language is required.

**Washington State University-** Entrance: Freshman and transfers with fewer than 40 quarter or 27 semester hours must have two years of a single foreign language in high school or one full year (through 103) in college. Students transferring with more than 40 quarter credits or the AA do not have to meet this requirement. Graduation: For programs in the College of Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts, students must meet

the stated graduation requirement regardless of freshman or transfer status. The Colleges of Engineering, Architecture, Business and Economics (except international business), Nursing and Pharmacy do not require a foreign language as a graduation requirement.

**Western Washington University-** *Entrance*-Freshman and Running Start applicants only must have two years of a single foreign language in high school or two quarters in college. Students transferring with the AA do not need to meet this requirement. Freshman and Running Start applicants will need to submit a high school transcript and ACT or SAT scores for purposes of admissions. *Graduation*: Foreign language is not required for graduation.