

University at Buffalo

Foreign Language Placement Tipsheet for Academic Advisors

Appropriate level:

If a student studied a foreign language in high school, s/he may continue studying such language at UB. As a rule of thumb, if the student took 3+ years of a foreign language in high school and did well (B or above), s/he should start at the intermediate level proficiency (151 level). If the student had less than 3 years of a high school foreign language, s/he should start at the 104 level (this applies to French, German, and Spanish). For other languages, students should consult with the course director for proper placement.

For most languages, the 101-102 sequence is for true beginners.

Heritage & native speakers must see the language coordinators for proper placement as entrance into lower level coursework is not allowed.

Remember that these are college level language courses. They are more rigorous than most high school language courses.

Is the level too high or too low?

If a student feels that s/he has been placed in a course that is too low or high for his/her previous level of knowledge, s/he should see the course director during drop/add. Of course, this is after giving him/herself some days to get used to hearing the foreign language spoken again after some time away from it.

Please be aware that if a student misrepresents his/her previous knowledge of the language, s/he can and will be administratively dropped from the course and if possible moved to the appropriate level. If there are no spaces available in other courses, the student will have to take the course at a later date. The language programs are not responsible for any financial penalties or difficulties incurred due to misrepresentation of knowledge on the student's part.

Remember, the key here is: if students get the **gist** of what is going on in class, they are at the right level. If they understand quite a bit or "feel comfortable", then they should be at a higher level.

Sequence of courses:

Students must take courses in the proper sequence (no jumping levels or going backwards is allowed). Thus, if they take 101, then they must take 102 in order to continue into 151 and then 152.

No credit will be given for duplicate courses, i.e. 104 duplicates 101-102; 154 duplicates 151-152. Thus, students in 101 or 102 cannot take 104, those in 151 or 152 cannot take 154 (this is for Spanish) and those in SPA 171 cannot take SPA 104.

Transferring coursework:

In some programs, if a student transfers coursework from another school that is equivalent to 101 or 151 levels, s/he will have to go to the department itself to be enrolled in 102 or 152 respectively (as long as there are seats available).

Transfer students with foreign language coursework should check in TAURUS for articulation of coursework. If there is no articulation, the student must make an appointment with the particular language coordinator and bring to the appointment the syllabus used for the course. Course descriptions are not enough to make articulation decisions. If the student does not have the syllabus, s/he must contact the transfer institution to receive a copy. Language coordinators will determine if the course/s match UB's or if the student needs to take additional coursework to fulfill the language requirement.

Transfer students whose courses are articulated to UB's language courses must be aware that they will have to review the syllabus of the UB equivalent of their transfer course/s. No two courses are identical so there will be some differences. It is the student's responsibility to review or catch up on work.

Repeating coursework:

Students who fail a language course must repeat the course before continuing to the next level/course sequence.

Registering in language courses:

Students must attend language courses from day one. Language teaching and learning start in full from the first day. Students must be aware that by the end of drop/add there has usually been a quiz and several graded homework assignments.

Please note that many language programs will apply absence policies and graded coursework requirements to students who show up for the first time after drop/add.

Students who are trying to get into a language course during drop/add should go to the class they are trying to get into from the beginning. Since language courses are performance-based classes, 2 weeks of missing work will, in most cases, have a tremendous impact on the student's ability to reach proficiency in the language. Note however, that if more than 24 students are in the classroom, the instructor has the right to ask the students who are not registered to leave due to fire code violations. In these cases, the students should make an appointment with the language coordinator as soon as possible.

Prepared by Language Coordinators in Romance Languages and Literatures and Linguistics.