

# LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

UCSD students may wish to have it certified that they have attained a level of conversational and reading proficiency that is adequate to conduct everyday life in a secondary language. Revelle College and Eleanor Roosevelt College require such certification for the B.A. degree. In addition, some UCSD departments have an undergraduate language requirement as part of their major program. The Linguistics department has accepted the responsibility of evaluating such proficiency for French, German, and Spanish. Students may take proficiency examinations in other languages when qualified testers are available. The guidelines for certification in these languages are as follows.

1. Students request to take a language proficiency examination by submitting the request form; link located on the Linguistics Language Program website page. The Linguistics Language Office keeps a list of approved test administrators. The only approved testers are ladder-ranked faculty and Unit 18 lecturers. Lecturers will be paid at the rate of \$40.00 per exam. Faculty will not be paid.
2. If verified by Linguistics as eligible to take an exam, the student is given the name, contact information and campus location of the tester(s) for the language. The student contacts the test administrator and makes an appointment for the exam. **The test administrator reviews the Proficiency Guidelines (below) \*before the test date\* and follows these guidelines for administering the exam.** After the exam the tester either certifies that the student has passed proficiency or indicates that the student is not proficient, and provides student with appropriate course level recommendation. The test administrator certifies the student's exam and their result by completing the online tester Google-form; link provided by the Linguistics Language Office.
3. The Language Office will notify the student's college or department of the results and will also inform the Registrar.
4. The Linguistics Department will process the lecturer compensation payments in the payroll system so that the lecturer will be paid.

**NOTE:** proficiency must be attained in both reading and conversation. Writing proficiency is not necessary.

## READING PROFICIENCY EVALUATION

The examination should test the student's overall reading comprehension as well as their accuracy in understanding details; these can be assessed by having the student translate a variety of (short) reading passages. A student who can extract specific information reliable from everyday material (such as newspapers) in the language has attained the level of reading proficiency adequate to pass the examination. In administering the examination, the examiner may help the student with occasional words or permit the student to use a dictionary; however, the amount of reading material and time limit used for the examination should be great enough to prevent the student from using such help as a substitute for what should be general knowledge of the language. For the purpose of this evaluation, the student is not expected to make no mistakes in translating, but is expected to be able to get the gist of what is read. The mistakes the student does make should be particular ones (e.g., not knowing a particular vocabulary item or idiom, or mistranslating a verb tense in an unidiomatic way), rather than mistakes that lead the examiner to believe that the student would in general misunderstand the essential matter in the reading.

## CONVERSATIONAL PROFICIENCY EVALUATION

1. The student may read a passage of common, everyday prose (e.g. a newspaper article aimed at a mass audience) for a few minutes, in order to provide a subject for starting the conversation.
2. The student then carries on a conversation with the interviewer (a more reliable evaluation will result if a team of two interviewers is used) for about 15 minutes. The interview may begin with questions about the article read, but conversation should be allowed to proceed naturally on any subject of interest; interviewers may help with words, as they would do in normal conversation with a foreigner.
3. For the student to satisfy the conversational proficiency requirement, the interviewer must certify that the student could handle normal class interchange in a basic substantive course (in mathematics, science, literature, history, etc.) conducted entirely in the language. To evaluate the student's performance, an interviewer should imagine that someone is asking, "Does this student speak Korean (Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.)?"

The student satisfies the requirement if the answer would come without hesitation, "Yes, of course", or "Yes, although he makes a lot of mistakes", or "Sure, but he has a terrible accent", or "Yes, he does but there are some surprising gaps in what he knows". In general, the required proficiency level has been attained if carrying on a conversation with the student is quite comfortable; even though it is quite obvious it is a conversation with a foreigner.

The student does not satisfy the requirement if the answer is "No", or "Not very well", or "Well, I'm not sure how much he understands", or "Well, he can make himself understood eventually", or "Well, his French (Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.) is not very good, but he somehow does manage to communicate something". In general, the required proficiency level has not yet been attained if the student has such massive difficulties that the interviewer feels uncomfortable in trying to carry on an ordinary conversation with the student in the language, and would normally avoid such conversation. In that case, the student could not be expected to handle normal classroom and social interchange adequately.

## REPORTING THE RESULTS

The results of the examination should be reported by the test administrator on the tester Google-form provided directly to test administrators by the Linguistics Language Office. Testers may contact [langinfo@ling.ucsd.edu](mailto:langinfo@ling.ucsd.edu) for the link. This information gets submitted directly to Linguistics and is what verifies that the examination is certified and complete.

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