

UW-College Foreign Language Placement Testing

Information provided from various locations on the UW College website:

<http://testing.wisc.edu/center.html>

Since 1984, UW system faculty and Wisconsin high school teachers have been collaborating to develop a test for placing incoming students into college German and Spanish courses. Two tests are now available: Language Usage and Reading Comprehension. These tests are available for each UW System campus to use according to its individual needs and resources. Each campus determines the appropriate scores for entry into specific courses.

Students do not receive credit for the placement test, but are eligible for retroactive credits if they receive a B or better in their first college course in the language. The number of retro credits available ranges from 4 to 16 depending upon the level at which the student begins. For more information, contact Student Services on the Colleges campus or the course instructor.

AHS students with advanced world language study have been quite successful in earning high scores on foreign language placement exams, successfully completing a semester of foreign language in college, and then receiving retro credits for previous semesters.

"Katie placed into 4th semester German at UW-Madison this fall. I am very pleased with her placement and know that she will be successful at this level."

- Bobbette Timmermann (AHS German instructor)

Since each institution determines its own placement procedures, it is difficult to generalize about what placements result from this test. Nonetheless, two key factors have emerged in our use of this instrument.

One of the most important factors related to placement scores is number of years studying Spanish [German]. Not surprisingly, students' scores on the placement test are in direct relationship to the number of Spanish [German] courses they took in middle and high school: the more Spanish [German] courses taken, the higher the placement. We have also noticed that the assumed high school/college equivalence may be somewhat different from what we expected in the past. Generally speaking, it appears that three years of high school Spanish [German] are roughly equivalent to one year (two semesters) of college study.

Another crucial factor that has emerged from studies conducted to develop this test is that time away from studying Spanish [German] appears to have detrimental consequences. Our statistics show that students who take Spanish [German] in the senior year of high school generally place higher than students who do not take Spanish [German] in their

senior year, even when they both have had the same number of years of Spanish [German] classes overall.

These two factors support the recommendation that students spend as many years as possible in Spanish [German] courses and that, once begun, their study should not be interrupted until the time when they have decided that no more course work in college will be needed.