

Foreign Language Evaluation: Placement vs. Proficiency

Foreign Language Placement and Proficiency Contacts: <https://osas.franklin.uga.edu/foreign-language-placement>

The Franklin Foreign Language Requirement requires students to demonstrate proficiency in a language at the third semester level or higher. Foreign language departments may measure a student's knowledge of a language in two ways: evaluation for the purpose of **placement**, or evaluation of **proficiency**. Each department decides whether to offer an evaluation process at all, and if they do offer an evaluation, whether they will evaluate for placement, proficiency, or both.

When a department evaluates a student for **placement**, they're making a ballpark estimate of which level a student can start with and be successful. This might simply involve a conversation with the student about the language classes they took in high school, without testing the student's knowledge. With placement, if a student enrolls in the recommended course and finds it's too advanced for them, they can easily switch to a lower level course. Placement may be determined by an individual who does not teach the language being evaluated. Because a placement evaluation is inexact and doesn't verify the level at which a student can read, write, and speak the language, it cannot be used to satisfy the Foreign Language Requirement.

Only an evaluation of **proficiency** can satisfy the Foreign Language Requirement. When a department evaluates **proficiency**, they administer a test they have constructed to assess the student's level of mastery of the language, similar to the tests available through Accessibility & Testing for Spanish, French, German, Hebrew, and Italian. A proficiency test must be administered by a faculty member who teaches the language at UGA and is therefore qualified to determine whether a student demonstrates third-semester proficiency or higher. To allow GCO to mark the requirement as satisfied, the faculty member must state in writing that they have evaluated the student's proficiency and determined that the student reads, writes, speaks, and understands the spoken language at a third-semester level or higher.