

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **IF I TOOK A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL, WHAT LEVEL SHOULD I TAKE AT PCC?**

PCC offers placement tests in Spanish and French in order to determine which level students should start at when they have previously taken foreign language classes. The foreign language knowledge that students bring when they come to the community college can differ widely. It is difficult to assess the students' language level because high school foreign language classes vary in their curricula.

- **HOW ARE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES IN HIGH SCHOOL DIFFERENT FROM THOSE AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE?**

Classes at the community college level are generally faster paced and more in-depth; therefore, more material is covered. As a result, students do not place as high as they expect to on foreign language placement tests.

- **I SPEAK SOME SPANISH AT HOME WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS, SO WHAT LEVEL OF SPANISH SHOULD I TAKE?**

The way we find out about a student's foreign language level is through the placement testing available for Spanish at PCC. It is important that students also have reading and writing skills, which are usually missing if they have only practiced the speaking and listening.

- **I NEVER TOOK SPANISH/FRENCH IN HIGH SCHOOL, SO I FEEL REALLY BEHIND. WHAT CAN I DO?**

The first level of the foreign language classes does not require any previous knowledge of the language. It is therefore not a problem if the student has never taken foreign language classes before. However, these students, should practice and review thoroughly through the VISTAS Supersite course resource. Also, the student may receive tutoring, especially at the beginning of the semester. On campus tutoring is provided free of charge. This will provide a good start and initial experience, which is important for a solid base of the fundamental elements of the language and continuous success.

- **I AM TRAVELING TO A SPANISH/FRENCH/GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRY SOON, HOW BEST CAN I LEARN TO COMMUNICATE?**

The first level classes of a foreign language introduce the fundamental elements of the language within a cultural context covering very basic vocabulary areas (greetings, school, family, free time activities) and grammar. Upon completion, students should be able to comprehend and respond with grammatical accuracy to simple spoken and written language in different situations and demonstrate cultural awareness. To prepare oneself for a particular experience abroad, it is important to use every opportunity that presents itself at the college or outside the college to use the language and learn about the foreign cultures.

- **WILL I BE FLUENT IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AFTER TAKING THIS COURSE?**

Fluency in a foreign language requires continuous learning and practice for several years. After taking foreign language classes, the student will have covered the grammar basics and will have built a basic vocabulary useful in different areas of everyday life. The student's proficiency will depend on the personal effort made and the frequency of usage of the foreign language.

- **IF I AM TAKING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSE ON CAMPUS, WHAT MATERIALS COULD I BUY TO SUPPLEMENT MY COURSE?**

The resources required for all foreign language classes at PCC offer a variety of materials to practice all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). For instance, the website that is used for the French and Spanish classes offers extensive extra material that students can use and explore. Although supplemental materials can be purchased at most bookstores, keep in mind that those materials may vary as to vocabulary and grammar.

- **WHY CAN I READ A FOREIGN LANGUAGE MUCH BETTER THAN I CAN SPEAK OR UNDERSTAND IT?**

Adult learners (high school or college students) have the most difficulty with the speaking and the listening skills since they are accustomed to learning material mainly through the written language. This is why it is so important for them to practice the speaking and listening as much as possible in class or through homework. The website used with our Spanish and French classes offers the possibility to practice those skills outside the classroom.

- **WHY IS MY INSTRUCTOR SO STRICT ABOUT CLASS ATTENDANCE?**

Regular class attendance is a requirement for foreign language classes. This is partly because it is the only way the instructor can assess all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of a student. Also, the learning of a foreign language requires human interaction and the practice of communicative skills. The classroom setting is a practice ground for real life situations.

- **DO I HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO SPELL THE WORDS?**

When learning a foreign language we need to develop all four skills that are used in human communication: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Learning the correct spelling is particularly important in the Spanish language since it is considered to be *spelled the way it is spoken/pronounced*. This means that it will help the learner to speak and understand the language better if he also learns to spell it correctly.

- **WHY ARE THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES “WEB-BASED”?**

The term “Web-based” indicates that the classes use the web/internet as part of the course required resources. The online materials provide extra listening and writing practice. Since PCC does not currently have a language lab and the classes meet only three hours per week, further practice is essential.

- **THE TEXTBOOK IS EXPENSIVE-- DO I REALLY NEED IT? CAN I PURCHASE IT ON-LINE OR USED?**

Yes, it is imperative to buy the textbook. The Spanish and French textbooks are sold as a package at the bookstore on our campus. The student can also purchase the resources online (it is important to note that Financial Aid will not reimburse online purchases). If the student purchases the textbook used, it is important to make sure that it is the correct edition

- **DOES ECU USE THE SAME BOOK THAT PCC USES?**

ECU often uses the same foreign language resources in their language classes. Students will be able to use the same textbook for all four levels of Spanish at PCC and for the language classes at ECU as well. The foreign language classes offered at PCC are courses that transfer to a four-year school.

- **WHAT OTHER LANGUAGE, SIMILAR TO SPANISH, CAN I TAKE/STUDY CONCURRENTLY AT PCC IF I WANT TO STUDY MULTIPLE LANGUAGES?**

Spanish is a romance language (deriving from Latin), and French is the only other romance language taught at PCC.

- **WHAT IS THE "SPANISH 112 HYBRID" COURSE?**

Most of this course is presented online with the exception of three class days at the beginning of the semester and the final exam for which students must be physically present. The online platform is Quia, not Blackboard. During the first three days of class, instruction will be given as to how to log into the Quia website. The hybrid course has the same focus as the traditionally delivered Spanish 112 class: the progressive development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This course is ideal for students who have a basic understanding of the sound system of Spanish. It is also very useful to the native speaker who due to personal circumstances does not have sufficient grammar and writing skills, but is comfortable with listening and speaking.

- **DO FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER TO THE UNIVERSITY?**

North Carolina has an articulation agreement between NC community colleges and universities, which allows the foreign language classes to transfer.

- **HOW ARE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DIFFERENT FROM FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES AT THE UNIVERSITY?**

The approach and resources used in class (even the use of an online source) are the same or very similar. In the case of Pitt Community College and ECU, the German and Spanish courses in both institutions often use the same resources and cover the same amount of chapters in each level.

- **WHEN I TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL, WILL I BE BEHIND WHEN I TAKE THE NEXT LEVEL OF MY FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSE?**

Except for the fact that the student might have used a different textbook covering different vocabulary and grammar, he/she should be fine. However, the student should check to see what the other institution will expect as previous knowledge.

- **DO I HAVE TO TAKE A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN ORDER TO GET MY ASSOCIATE IN ARTS DEGREE OR MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE?**

No. Currently only NC high schools have a foreign language requirement that must be met in order to attend a university. However, students may find that the major they plan to pursue at the university has a foreign language requirement. The following majors for a Bachelor of Arts degree require 4 semesters of a foreign language: English, history, psychology, philosophy, communications, sociology, political science, economics, etc.

- **CAN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) BE USED TO FULFILL FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS?**

NC passed an ASL bill, which recognizes ASL as a modern language. Therefore, ASL is considered a foreign language in NC High Schools. However, ASL is still often not accepted as a foreign language at the university level. ASL is often accepted at a fine art or an elective. And even further, some NC universities, including ECU, will accept ASL only to fulfill admission requirements (high school MCR).