



Five College Center for World Languages

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The Final Evaluations

The Evaluation Process

Measuring the student's accomplishment at the end of the semester is the culmination of the student's period of study. There are checks and balances throughout the program, and homework is marked and returned, but the ultimate test of a student's language growth comes with the final evaluations or exams. We strongly recommend that external professors of the target language be contracted to give one-on-one, 20-30 minute oral exams to each student. With web technology, this can be accomplished with a simple SKYPE set-up.

Qualified Examining Professors

The validity of the program depends on the quality of the examining professors. In the evaluation process, it is imperative that the term "professor of the target language" not be confused with "native speaker who is a professor." The two are not interchangeable. A native speaker, even a highly educated native speaker, is not an expert in language acquisition and does not know how to formulate or execute an oral language exam. A native speaker does not necessarily have the requisite skills to be an effective examiner. It is not an intuitive process. A trained language acquisition expert, on the other hand, will immediately hone in on the student's approximate level of fluency and use that as a base for the exam. The student will be challenged but not overwhelmed and will be able to demonstrate all that has been learned.

A "Pro-chievement Examination"

This type of exam – built around the material that the student has been assigned and nothing else – is called a "pro-chievement" exam by the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Programs. For a semi-independent language acquisition program to succeed, the exams must be pro-chievement exams.

Written Evaluations

Depending on the size of the program and the agreements made between the program and the external examiners, the external examiner may also create the final written evaluation. This is a task, however, that can be accomplished also at the mentor level.

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