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# Five College Mentored Language Program Online Orientation Tutorial

## Instructions

This tutorial answers many frequently asked questions about the program. Students applying for admission to the Five College Mentored Language Program are required to study this online orientation tutorial and **submit the online tutorial response on the bottom** before being considered for admission.

Course schedules and applications are on the [Five College Center for the Study of World Languages](#) website. For questions, e-mail [fclrc@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:fclrc@hfa.umass.edu) or call 413-542-5264 (413-542-LANG).

## About

### Who sponsors the Mentored Language Program and where do sessions meet?

#### Joint Sponsorship

The Five College Mentored Language Program is sponsored jointly by the Five Colleges: Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The administrative home of the program is the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages (FCCSWL) which is located at Amherst College, at 79 S. Pleasant St. in downtown Amherst ([directions](#)). FCCSWL's operations and staff are supported equally by each of the five institutions. The courses offered by FCCSWL are listed at the University and have been approved for Five College interchange credit by each of the other four campuses. FCCSWL's staff are Five Colleges, Incorporated employees.

#### Mission of FCCSWL

The role of FCCSWL is to support study of the Less-Commonly Taught Languages (commonly abbreviated as LCTLs) by Five College students. FCCSWL works only with languages not represented in traditional classroom language offerings at the colleges. The one exception is Arabic for which the Mentored Language Program offers supplementary courses in spoken and colloquial Arabic. In addition to offering courses, FCCSWL also engages in numerous course and materials development

projects funded by government and private foundation grants.

## **Sessions on All Five Campuses**

Sessions for Mentored Language Program courses meet on all five campuses. We try to vary the schedule each semester so that beginning level courses are spread among the campuses. Sessions meet in regular classrooms or in special satellite offices established on some of the campuses:

- Amherst College: Sessions meet in classrooms, often in Converse Hall near the Five College bus stop, but also in other classroom spaces.
- Hampshire College: Sessions meet in classrooms and in the FCCSWL satellite office on the 3rd floor of the library.
- Mount Holyoke College: Most sessions meet in Ciruti 6A in the Language Resource Center (lower-level of Ciruti), sometimes in other classrooms.
- Smith College: Sessions meet in the FCCSWL satellite office at 138 Elm St. #3 or in classroom space.
- University of Massachusetts-Amherst: Sessions meet in either Bartlett 69 (lower-level of Bartlett) or in classroom space.

## **Format**

### **What is the format of the program? How is it different from regular classroom language courses?**

#### **What is the Mentored Language Program?**

The Mentored Language Program is a vehicle through which Five College students can study many of the less commonly taught languages. The program combines structured independent study with individual tutorial sessions and small group conversation sessions. Weekly preparation is guided by specially designed syllabi, study guides, and multimedia materials. At the end of the course, students have both oral and written evaluations. The oral evaluations are conducted by outside evaluators who are professors of the language at other institutions or by local language faculty.

#### **Why is it called “Mentored”?**

The format resembles an independent study more than a classroom course. Feedback and practice are provided through individual and small group sessions. Each student meets one-on-one with a language "mentor" to ask questions and get further explanations about the work covered that week. Students also meet weekly in small groups with mentors and/or native speaking conversation partners for conversation practice.

## **How are mentored language sessions different from regular classroom sessions?**

- There is no large class; instructional interactions are all either one-on-one or in small group sessions.
- There is no teacher presenting a lesson each day; students work independently using the structured study guides and then ask questions and practice using the language in individual and small group sessions.
- A regular classroom course addresses learning issues common to a group of students; all mentored language sessions are student-centered and focus on the needs of individual students or on effective communication in the language among a small group of students.

## **Why are they called “mentors” and not “teachers”?**

- The term "mentor" is used to stress the individualized nature of the course format. A regular classroom teacher presents information to a larger body of students and then leads the class through a set of activities designed to address the common needs of the entire group. A mentor works individually with each student to discover his or her particular needs and then works with the student on those issues and skills.
- Mentors take their lead from the student's questions and from individualized evaluations of a student's progress. The mentors also strive to work with each student to develop good language learning strategies for the student's independent study time and to help each student develop a realistic plan for a successful semester of language study.

# **Mentors**

## **Who are the language mentors?**

### **Language Mentors**

A variety of language professionals and native speakers of the language work as mentors and conversation partners with the Mentored Language Program.

- **Full-Time Mentors:** The Center has a full-time language mentors for both Swahili and Hindi. Dr. Agnes Kimokoti is the Five College Swahili Mentor. Karla Carruth is the full-time post-baccalaureate Teaching Assistant for Hindi. Both full-time mentors have the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages as a home base, but conduct tutorials and conversation sessions on all five campuses each week.
- **Visiting Fulbright Scholars and Five College International Scholars:** Each year the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages hosts visiting scholars who work as language mentors with the program. Most of these scholars come through the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program. This program brings young scholars who are training to teach English in their home countries to the U.S. for one year. The scholars gain experience in

language pedagogy by teaching their native language to speakers of English, while also having the opportunity to live and work in an American academic environment.

- Local Graduate Students: A few local graduate students work as language tutors and conversation partners each semester.
- Undergraduate Native Speakers: Undergraduate native speakers who have been formally educated in their native language sometimes work as conversation partners for small group conversation sessions. Undergraduates do not conduct individual tutorials or grade homework.



## Tutorials

**What is an individual tutorial?**

## **Individual Tutorials**

Individual tutorials emphasize the reading and writing aspects of the course. A student brings his or her own questions about the homework for the week, the mentor looks over the homework for evidence of confusions or difficulties that need attention, and then the mentor and student work through various activities designed to evaluate and increase the student's mastery of the formal structure and vocabulary of the language. Mentors will also work with students on individual issues with speaking and pronunciation. The session will be conducted as much as possible in the language students are learning, but the mentors will also do some more complex explanations of grammar and usage in English.

## **Starting with Questions Rather Than a Presentation of the Lesson**

In a traditional classroom course, a teacher typically presents some aspect of the lesson material before students read and complete homework on that topic. In the mentored format, students are introduced to the topic first through structured independent study using textbooks and available multimedia materials. Students complete written homework before coming to the session and keep a list of questions and confusions to ask the mentor about in the session. If the student has understood the material well on his or her own, then the mentor will work on more complex uses of the material with the student. If the student has had difficulty with specific aspects of the lesson, the mentor and the student will work through the difficulties together.

## **What if I'm confused and can't make progress on the lesson?**

For the most part, students in the program need to be comfortable dealing with some confusion and sorting out problems for themselves by looking at numerous examples and going over materials multiple times if necessary. It is inevitable, however, that sometimes a certain concept is just too confusing and students come to tutorials with unfinished homework or with homework with many mistakes because of misunderstandings. In these cases, the mentor will work with the student to clarify the problems and then have the student do the homework over again before the next week.

## **What if I have questions during the time between tutorials?**

In a language class that meets multiple times a week, there are multiple opportunities to have questions answered. There are fewer opportunities in the Mentored Language Program. Most of the mentors will answer questions by e-mail during the week. Some questions will be clarified during conversation sessions. While mentors do not do special makeup sessions for students who miss sessions, mentors will occasionally meet for an extra session with students who need extra help. Students are also encouraged to make use of other resources such as more advanced students of the same language, fellow students who are native speakers of the language, and various online resources. Students need to be aware that both fellow students and websites may not represent the most formal and accurate forms of the language and so students must be careful about the advice they are getting.

## **Characteristics of a Good Tutorial Session:**

- the student arrives well-prepared with completed homework assignments
- the student has self-checked any homework for which answer keys are provided
- the student is prepared with questions for the mentor about the assignments
- the mentor arrives well-prepared and ready to work with the student

- the mentor has prepared activities beyond going over the homework and responding to student questions
- the mentor is patient and provides clear and helpful explanations
- questions, problems, and corrections are dealt with in a constructive manner

**Beginning of Session Warm-Up (Swahili)**

**Beginning of Session Warm-Up (Persian)**

**Going Over Homework (Swahili)**

**Going Over Homework (Turkish)**

**Explaining a Grammar Rule (Persian)**

**Reading Comprehension in a Tutorial Session (Swahili)**

# Conversation Sessions

## What is a conversation session?

### Conversation Sessions

Conversation sessions provide a chance for learners to practice using the language. The session is conducted entirely in the language students are learning with an opportunity to ask questions in English at the very end of every session. Conversation sessions focus on using the language in the types of situations one might encounter in everyday life. Students commonly engage in role plays, question and answer activities, description, narration, and problem-solving exercises. In beginning level courses, typical topics are greetings, introductions, getting acquainted conversations, telephone calls, asking for directions, shopping and bargaining, and talking about schedules and events in the past, present or future. More advanced students will practice more complex speech activities that involve expressing opinions, giving reasons in arguments, and discussing current events and cultural issues.

### Conversation Partners

In this program, the term "conversation partner" is used to refer to the person who leads the conversation session. That person might be one of the language mentors or it might be an undergraduate conversation partner who has been formally educated in the language. The role of the conversation partner is to facilitate activities that make active use of the language. In a successful conversation session, the students will be the ones doing most of the talking for at least 90% of the time. The conversation partner may engage students in dialogue or may have students work in pairs with one another. The conversation partner will use the language being learned throughout the session. At the end of the session, the conversation partner will give students a chance to ask questions in English.

## What makes a good conversation session?

Here are some characteristics of a good conversation session:

- students are actively speaking throughout the session
- activities encourage students to create language rather than read from a book or piece of paper
- every student gets an equal chance to participate

- the interactions are almost completely in the target language, English is used sparingly
- every student in the session arrives well-prepared
- the conversation partner arrives well-prepared
- questions, problems, and corrections are dealt with in a constructive manner

**Questions and Answers Between Students (Swahili)**

**Role Playing Informal Greetings (Pashto)**

**Role Playing Meeting a New Friend for Lunch (Persian)**

**Discussing What a Student Did Last Week (Persian)**

**Discussing a Reading (Swahili)**

**Drilling a Student on Sentence Structure (Persian)**

## Course Materials

### Where do I find my syllabus, study guides, multimedia materials, and textbooks?

#### Syllabus and Study Guides

Syllabi and study guides are housed here on the LangMedia website. The primary web address for this website is: <http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>. Choose the link for your language to find your syllabus. Syllabi are near the bottom of each language page. There are individual links for each mentored language.

#### Find your Syllabus

1. Open a new browser window and open the Langmedia website:  
<http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>.
2. Find the link to your language, click to the page and open the syllabus for your course.  
**Exceptions:** Some courses which are still experimental do not have an online syllabus or have only a downloadable document as a syllabus. If you are in one of these courses, study the syllabus for one of the other courses that is online now. The paper syllabi and schedule you receive when you register will take the place of the online syllabus.
3. Look at the timeline for your course. Course assignments are organized by the week. Each week has one or two study guides assigned.
4. Make note of when tutorials and conversation session starts, what happens during weeks when there are holidays or breaks, and also make note of review and evaluation periods.
5. Note that each week also has a link to a Self-Assessment form. Each student submits a weekly self-assessment. This will be discussed in more detail in the course requirements section.

#### Examine a Study Guide

1. Click on one of the study guide links. Look at the overall structure of the study guide. The first section should list either the materials to be covered or a list of study goals for that guide (the exact section headings vary a bit among languages).
2. The first section(s) is/are followed by "Assignments for Independent Study." These assignments will walk you through the materials and exercises you need to complete during your independent study sessions. The assignments include a combination of reading, writing,

speaking, and listening exercises. As you work your way through these exercises, you will be doing the preparation which is expected of you for the course.

3. The study guide includes references to any multimedia materials required for the course. In some cases, there are direct links to online multimedia materials. In other cases, the study guide refers to CDs or DVDs which are packaged with the textbook. Look over the assignments for these references to multimedia and make sure you understand what kinds of multimedia will be required for your course and how you will access it.
4. **Conversation Session Preparation:** This section summarizes what you should prepare to do in your conversation practice. A significant amount of your study time each week needs to be devoted to oral practice. This means you must have a regular time and place to study where you can talk out loud without bothering others. To do well, you literally need to TALK TO YOURSELF. You need to act out various role plays or dialogs, describe things, and narrate events aloud, etc. At least 50% of your weekly study time should be spent on speaking practice and oral improvisation.
5. **Homework to Hand in at Tutorial:** This section lists the written work you need to complete and bring with you to your individual tutorial session. Your mentor will go over questions and issues raised by the homework assignment in your tutorial. The mentor will then collect the homework and correct it more thoroughly before handing it back at the next tutorial session.

## Textbooks

[Amherst Books](#) no longer finds it cost effective to stock books for mentored language courses. Students should order textbooks online or check with Amherst Books or another local bookstore about special ordering the texts. Some textbooks are only available online.

We recommend purchasing textbooks a month or two ahead of time so that you can get familiar with the introductory material before the semester starts. Do not wait until the last minute. If you have questions about textbooks or are having trouble finding them in stock, contact the FCCSWL office immediately so we can help you with the process and can be made aware of any availability issues as soon as possible.

# Credits & Workload

## How many credits? What is the work load?

### Half Courses and Full Courses

The standard Mentored Language Program course is a half course. Courses labeled with a single level number are half courses: Swahili I, Hindi I, Turkish I, etc. In some languages, full courses are offered. Students in full courses complete two half courses during the semester. These courses are labeled with two level numbers: Swahili I-II, Swahili III-IV, Hindi I-II, Turkish I-II, etc.

### Work Load

Mentored language courses require a significant time commitment. Students spend less time in structured classroom settings and more time in independent study. Students in half courses need to devote at least one hour per day (seven hours per week) to independent study, plus the time required



for conversation sessions and tutorials. Students in full courses need to commit at least two hours per day to independent study, plus conversation session and tutorial time. Students need to arrange a schedule which allows for regular daily study and not try to cram language study into a few days a week.

## Credit Varies by Campus

- **Amherst College:** A Mentored Language half course equals an Amherst half course; a Mentored Language full course equals an Amherst full course. Amherst students are reminded that two half-courses do not necessarily make a full course; students should consult the registrar for how this policy applies to their courses.
- **Hampshire College:** A Mentored Language half course equals a Hampshire half course; a Mentored Language full course equals a Hampshire full course. Hampshire students who run into issues with limits on Five College interchange registration during the pre-registration period should consult with a FCCSWL staff member about how to work this out.
- **Mount Holyoke College:** Most Mentored Language half courses are worth 2.0 Mount Holyoke credits, and most full courses are worth 4.0 Mount Holyoke credits. For Hindi for Hindi-Urdu Speakers, Urdu for Urdu-Hindi Speakers, and Written Persian, half courses are worth 1.5 Mount Holyoke credits and full courses are worth 3.0 Mount Holyoke credits. Mentored language courses cannot be used to meet the Mount Holyoke language requirement.
- **Smith College:** Most Mentored Language half courses are worth 2.0 Smith credits, and most full courses are worth 4.0 Smith credits. For Hindi for Hindi-Urdu Speakers, Urdu for Urdu-Hindi Speakers, and Written Persian, half courses are worth 1.5 Smith credits and full courses are worth 3.0 Smith credits. It is a Smith policy that at the elementary level (levels I through IV) the equivalent of two FCCSWL half courses must be completed to receive credit.
- **University of Massachusetts-Amherst:** Most Mentored Language half courses are worth 2.0 credits, and most full courses are worth 4.0 credits. For Hindi for Hindi-Urdu Speakers, Urdu for Urdu-Hindi Speakers, and Written Persian, half courses are worth 1.5 credits and full courses are worth 3.0 credits. Mentored Language courses cannot be used to meet the College of Humanities and Fine Arts language requirement. In some cases, the courses can be part of an individualized plan to meet the Global Education Requirement for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (which applies to students who entered UMass prior to the Fall 2018 semester). SBS students who need to meet this requirement should consult their academic advisor about this option.

# Requirements

## What are the course requirements? How are students evaluated?

### Course Requirements

Course requirements are listed on the online syllabus for each course. A general version of each of the requirements is discussed below. The requirements differ somewhat depending upon whether the course is a half course or a full course. There are also variations for courses which focus only on speaking or only on written language (such as Formal Spoken Arabic A or Written Persian I). Consult your syllabus for your course's specific version of the requirements.

**IMPORTANT! Read your course requirements carefully! They will not be explained to you at another time. It is your responsibility to read and understand the requirements and to ask for clarification if necessary. You will be responsible for meeting the requirements in order to pass the course. Contact the program staff with any questions.**

- 1. Successful mastery of the material assigned on the syllabus and its accompanying study guides.** Students are reminded that final comprehensive oral evaluations will cover all material assigned for the course regardless of whether more or less time was spent on each topic in conversation sessions and tutorials. The content of the syllabus and the study guides is the guide to what may be covered in the final oral evaluation.
- 2. Daily independent study.**  
Half courses: at least one hour per day of independent study  
Full courses: at least two hours per day of independent study  
Independent study needs to include practice in all four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. It also needs to include regular review of materials covered in previous weeks. All language study is cumulative.
- 3. Weekly individual tutorials.**  
Half courses: one 30-minute tutorial per week  
Full courses: one 60-minute or two 30-minute tutorials per week  
Mentors will collect and go over written homework assignments, answer questions brought by students, work on individual issues with pronunciation and grammar, and provide practice drills in preparation for written and oral evaluations.
- 4. Weekly conversation sessions.**  
Half courses: generally one 60-minute conversation session per week  
Full courses: either one 1.5 hour session per week or two 60-minute sessions per week  
Conversation sessions provide practice in both speaking and listening comprehension. The sessions constitute the primary practice for the oral fluency portion of the final evaluation.
- 5. Weekly homework assignments handed in at the tutorial meeting.**  
Homework will be collected by the mentors, photocopied and placed in a portfolio for each student. Homework must be handed in on time at the tutorial to receive credit. Mentors may read and comment on late homework, but students will not receive credit toward their final course grade unless the homework is turned in on time. Any exceptions due to illness or other emergencies must be cleared by the program director or associate director.  
**Homework grading:** Homework is graded on a 100-point scale. For exercises which have answer keys, students are expected to make use of the answer keys to check their own work. Mentors will look for evidence of self-correction when going over homework.
- 6. Weekly self-assessment reports submitted on time using the online form.**  
Weekly self-assessment reports submitted on time using the online form. Self-assessments are due at the end of each week and are recorded as "on time" as long as they are received by 9:00 am the following Monday morning. Self-assessments must be filed on time in order to get credit. The self-assessments help students to evaluate their own progress in learning the language, their overall development of language learning strategies, and also alert the program staff to any problems with preparation or logistical details of the course.
- 7. Writing skills assessment to be completed by the end of the semester.**  
Writing skills assessments evaluate a student's ability to express him- or herself in the language being studied. Students will be able to complete the assessment by appointment or during designated drop-in hours in the final weeks of the semester.
- 8. Final comprehensive oral evaluation.**  
The final oral evaluation covers conversational fluency, listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge. The final oral evaluations are given by local faculty-level mentors or by professors of the language from other institutions.

Current outside evaluators come from such institutions as Dartmouth, Indiana University, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, St. Olaf College, UCLA, University of California, Berkeley, University of Maryland, University of Wisconsin, and Yale.

## Format of the Final Oral Evaluation

The format of the final oral varies somewhat depending upon the style of individual evaluators. The evaluations last between 20-30 minutes. Generally, evaluators adopt a conversational mode in order to see what the student is able to do with the language. Other activities may include: question and answer exercises, reading out loud, or having the student ask questions of the evaluator. In general, the oral evaluation covers the material practiced in conversation sessions during the semester, along with attention to the formal grammar and vocabulary covered in tutorial sessions and written work.

## Grading Percentages

- 50% work during the semester
  - 40% written homework
  - 10% attendance, preparation, participation, and self-assessments
- 50% end-of-the-semester evaluations
  - 40% final comprehensive oral evaluation
  - 10% writing skills assessment
- Another way of looking at the grading percentages is that 50% of the final course grade is based on written work (homework and the writing skills assessment) and 50% on oral evaluation plus attendance, preparation, participation, and self-assessments.
- **IMPORTANT:** Both the writing skills assessment and the final comprehensive oral evaluation must be passed in order to receive credit for the course.
- Final grades are submitted by the program director based on final evaluation grades and the student's overall course participation record and homework portfolio.
- A student who receives a grade below a B- for the course or who has repeated absences from sessions will not be allowed to enroll in future FCCSWL courses. FCCSWL courses cannot be repeated to replace a failing grade or to improve a grade.

# Schedule

## What is the schedule for the semester? What deadlines do I need to meet?

### Program Schedule

- **Pre-registration and tutorial scheduling period:** Students admitted to a course during the pre-registration period will be asked to submit schedule information to the FCCSWL office at [fclrc@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:fclrc@hfa.umass.edu) by the end pre-registration. Students included in this first round of scheduling will receive tutorial times and times for "to be assigned" conversation sessions in May/June for the following fall semester and in late Dec./early Jan. for the spring semester. Students applying for courses after the first round of scheduling will need to be able to fit into remaining available slots in order to be given approval to register.
- **Prior to the start of the semester:**

Purchase textbooks; locate syllabus and study guides; access required multimedia material. If you have any problems finding textbooks or accessing other materials, contact the FCCSWL staff as soon as possible for assistance.

- **First week of the semester:**

Attend your first tutorial and conversation session with the first week's assignment from your syllabus already prepared. There will be no general introduction to the course; your mentors and conversation partners will start working with you immediately on the assigned language learning materials. This online tutorial functions as your orientation and introduction to the course format and requirements.

- **Schedule changes during add/drop:**

If you develop a schedule conflict with your tutorial or conversation session times during add/drop, you will no longer be guaranteed a space in the course. If there are alternate spaces available, you may request a change, but changes are not guaranteed and the opportunities to change to a different time are extremely limited.

- **During the semester:**

Organize your time wisely. Set regular daily times for oral and written work. Homework is due at your tutorial. Self-assessments are due at the end of every week. Self-assessments will be considered late if they arrive after 9:00 am the following Monday morning.

- **Holiday and Break Schedules:**

All sessions meet on the regularly scheduled day and time throughout the semester. This includes fall break (Columbus Day weekend) and other days when only one campus has days off or follows an altered schedule, such as Mountain Day, Rally Day, Advising days, federal/state holidays at UMass, and days when UMass follows an alternate day's schedule. The only weeks when sessions are cancelled are Thanksgiving week in the fall and Spring Break week in the spring semester. Address questions about your individual situation to the FCCSWL staff.

- **Full-course mid-terms:**

Students in full courses will have midterms around the 5-6th week of the semester. Consult your syllabus for the dates. The mid-terms mark the end of the first half course. Mid-term orals are typically held during the student's regular tutorial time. There will be drop-in hours for completing the writing skills assessment.

- **End of the semester final oral evaluation scheduling:**

Scheduling individual oral evaluations for all FCCSWL students is a monumental task each semester. The outside evaluators have very tight schedules and there is a limited window of opportunity within which oral evaluations can be conducted. The program assistant in charge of scheduling will request updated schedules from all students in mid-Oct. or mid-March.

STUDENTS MUST REPLY PROMPTLY WITH UPDATED SCHEDULE INFORMATION. Students who fail to reply will be scheduled without consultation and will be required to meet the time scheduled or take an F for the evaluation. Students must be aware that it may be necessary to reschedule work study or other non-academic commitments in order to take an oral evaluation.

- **Final evaluation period:**

The dates for the final evaluation period are on the syllabus. Do not make travel plans before you know the date and time of your final oral evaluation. If you anticipate a serious conflict, discuss your situation with the program director/associate director prior to the start of the semester in order to see if it is still possible for you to take the course.

## Policies

# What if ... ? (questions, absences, course drops, etc.)

## Logistical Questions

Address questions about course logistics to the FCCSWL staff, not to your mentor or conversation partner. FCCSWL language courses each have a staff member assigned as the course organizer for the course. The course organizer for all Mentored language courses is **Theo Hull**. They are the person to contact about issues such as difficulties purchasing or accessing materials, scheduling problems, evaluation scheduling, and questions about meeting course requirements. They can be contacted at [fcmlp2@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:fcmlp2@hfa.umass.edu) or **413-542-5264**.

## Scheduling and Attendance Policies

- **Absences:** Students are graded on attendance. If you are ill, have a job or graduate school interview, or a religious holiday, you can be excused from the session so that you are not penalized for missing a session. Students who need excused absences should e-mail the FCCSWL staff AND their mentor/ conversation partner. Students who miss a session will not get a makeup session and need to arrange to spend more time on the material on their own. Students missing tutorials should arrange to get their completed homework to the mentor for grading.
- **Extended absences due to health or personal emergencies:** Students who experience serious health problems or other personal emergencies need to consult with the health services and/or appropriate deans on their home campus. If extended absences are necessary, the program director/associate director will work with the student and appropriate deans to determine the best course of action.
- **Schedule changes:** If you develop a schedule conflict with your tutorial or conversation session times at any time during the semester, you will no longer be guaranteed a space in the course. If there are alternate spaces available, you may request a change, but changes are not guaranteed and the opportunities to change to a different time are extremely limited. Schedule change requests should go through the program director/associate director, not through your mentor. Mentors do not organize schedules.
- **Snow emergencies and snow days:** Winter snow emergencies occasionally cause delays and cancellations of Five College bus service, early closings of campuses, or snow days being declared on one or more campuses. Because we do not want any students or mentors to get stranded away from their home campus, we will generally cancel tutorials and conversation sessions if 1) the National Weather Service has issued a warning for severe winter weather for the time period of the sessions; and 2) the students and or mentors affected would have to travel to other than their own campus. We will not cancel if the mentor and the students involved live on the same campus. If a snow day has been declared in the morning, tutorials and conversation sessions may still take place late in the late afternoon or evening if the weather has cleared and the buses are running. Cancellations due to weather will be sent by e-mail. If you have weather related questions, e-mail [fclrc@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:fclrc@hfa.umass.edu). If the office is open you may also call 542-5264. If the office is closed because of weather, use e-mail instead.
- **Final evaluation dates are on your syllabus:** Do not make travel plans (such as buying a plane ticket) until you know the exact date and time of your final evaluation. Graduating seniors, please remind the office of your senior grade deadline!

## Other Important Policies

- **Drop and course repetition policies:** Drop policies differ by home campus. The drop policy for your campus will be stated on the course contract you will sign when you register for the

course. A student who receives a grade below a B- for the course or who has repeated absences from conversation sessions will not be allowed to enroll in future Five College Center for the Study of World Languages (FCCSWL) courses. FCCSWL courses cannot be repeated to replace a failing grade or to improve a grade.

- **Accommodations:** The University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages are committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS) at UMass or on your home campus, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in your Five College Spoken Arabic course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify the program director within the first three weeks of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## How to Succeed

### What do I need to do to be successful in this program? Is this program a good fit?

#### Do you have time?

Lack of sufficient time is the number one reason we will discourage someone from enrolling in a Mentored Language Course. It is also the number one reason students will drop a course after enrolling. To be successful in this program, you need to be sure that you will have enough time to study. Be realistic about your schedule. You need time to study for all your courses, eat, sleep, relax, and take care of work or extra-curricular activities. You also need to take into account work commitments, extra-curricular activities, and other factors such as job/internship searches, senior thesis/projects, or major family events which might affect your time for the semester.

Generally, we recommend that students take a half-course as a fifth major course, but not as a sixth course. We recommend that students taking a full-course take it as one of only four primary courses for the semester. The course load for UMass students is distributed slightly differently from the colleges, so UMass students sometimes take a full course as a fifth course as long as the overall load is still within the standard amount of credits for the semester.

#### Approach Language Study as a Training/Practice Regimen

Language study is a serious commitment. You need to think of language study as similar to athletic training, musical training, or practice in dance or theater. It takes sustained practice and study everyday in order to make noticeable progress. Simply completing a set of exercises will not produce tangible results. Depending upon the course, you need to practice at least one or two hours everyday, using all four primary skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In preparation for the semester, you should map out in your schedule the times you will devote to language practice. Take into account the times of day you work best and when you can work without interruption.

## Study Where You Can Talk to Yourself

You need to practice where you can comfortably repeat and imitate the speakers in audio and video materials. You also need to spend time improvising out loud, thinking through the various types of scenarios and speaking tasks you will do in your conversation sessions. You need to pretend you are part of a role play or real situation in which you need to address and respond to people. Imagine how you would handle certain situations and practice the speech involved out loud.

## Review Constantly

Language courses are cumulative. It is easy to forget the vocabulary and forms learned in earlier weeks if you do not continually review. It is also easy to find yourself feeling lost and overwhelmed half-way through the semester, if you have not been systematically reviewing as you go. Include time for review every day.

## Read Your E-Mail, Stay in Touch with Questions and Concerns, Respond to Queries Promptly

Organizing the Mentored Language Program is a complex process. You will be one of 100-150 students in 60 different courses working with over 25 mentors and conversation partners. Mentors and conversation partners help you with learning the language; the FCCSWL staff helps you deal with logistical issues related to your course. Each language has a staff member who serves as the course organizer for all courses in that language. Your course organizer is your first contact about logistical issues. If for some reason, your course organizer is not available, another staff member will help you. You will be introduced via email to your course organizer at the start of the course.

In this context, your success in the course requires you to take the initiative in communicating with your course organizer and in responding promptly to e-mail queries. Here are some situations that require PROMPT e-mails or calls to your course organizer:

- **Textbooks unavailable or any online materials you can't access:** Contact your course organizer right away if you find a textbook is unavailable or you are waiting for one that is on order. Do not wait until your session with the mentor to explain there is an access problem. The FCCSWL staff is here to help with logistical issues. They will help assess the situation and make sure that you get access to the materials you need so that you do not get behind in your assignments. The same goes for online materials, whether on LangMedia or elsewhere. This is a problem for the FCCSWL staff to deal with, not your mentor. Remember: Mentors help you learn the language; your course organizer and other FCCSWL staff members deal with logistical issues.
- **Scheduling or room assignment confusions:** If you do not find your session at the time and place you expected, contact the office immediately so we can sort out the confusion. During the day, you can call our office at 413-542-5264. If it is evening, e-mail. Campuses sometimes change room assignments, buses breakdown, or someone gets ill. As soon as you let us know the problem, we will work on sorting it out.
- **Provide your schedule accurately and promptly for oral evaluation scheduling:** At mid-semester time, you will receive an e-mail from your course organizer asking you to provide your schedule for the oral evaluation period. Respond PROMPTLY and ACCURATELY. The evaluation scheduler is looking for a single time block that works for the outside evaluator and every single student needing an individual oral in that language. Given the very tight schedules of outside evaluators, possible time blocks are usually few and far between. "Oops, I goofed" is

not a good response if you neglected to write a course on your schedule and everything is all scheduled. It is not possible to change your oral evaluation time slot once it has been scheduled.

## **FINAL WORD: Practice Proactive Communication Skills**

In order to successfully manage the logistical side of this course, you need to practice proactive communication skills similar to those required in a professional internship or work environment. To do this successfully, you need to:

- check email at least twice per day (once in the am and once in the pm);
- keep the email and phone number of the Center in your contact list and promptly contact the office if logistical questions or issues come up (for something that needs quick response during business hours, please call, we may not see your email in time);
- read emails carefully, note how the information applies to your situation, and promptly take whatever next step or response is necessary;
- take a proactive approach to problem solving if something is confused or amiss by actively seeking solutions, information, or persons that can help sort out the situation.

# **End of Tutorial and Response**

## **End of Tutorial**

Students who need to complete this orientation tutorial as part of an application for a Mentored Language Program course, need to submit the **[TUTORIAL RESPONSE](#)**. Once your orientation is complete and your application approved, you will be able to make an appointment or attend a drop-in session to do the paperwork necessary to enroll.

### **Five College Center for the Study of World Languages**

79 South Pleasant St, Suite 100

Amherst College, AC Box 2264

Amherst, MA 01002

USA

[FCCSWL website](#)

p: 413-542-5264

e: [fclang@fivecolleges.edu](mailto:fclang@fivecolleges.edu)



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[Staff login](#)



