

PENNSYLVANIA  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
TRANSFER AND  
ARTICULATION  
AGREEMENT FOR  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DRAFT 2

## **Transfer and Articulation Agreement for Foreign Languages**

### **Introduction**

The articulation agreement for foreign language learning at the college level presented herein is based on two important initiatives introduced by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): The ACTFL National Standards and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. These documents have reshaped the teaching of foreign languages and have also guided the assessment of language proficiency.

Efforts to introduce the ACTFL National Standards into the foreign language landscape began with financial aid from the Department of Education and the collaboration of ACTFL and its affiliated professional organizations. A working team put together the National Standards that were initially presented for review at a conference in Baltimore in 1994 (Brown, 1995) and finally released in 1996 (LeLoup & Ponteiro, 1997).

According to ACTFL (1996), the National Standards are ideal parameters to be used in combination with locally developed criteria to gauge foreign language gains over time. On the other hand, the Proficiency Guidelines are broad descriptions based largely on the linguistic levels implemented by the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and have been adjusted for academic purposes (Breiner-Sanders, Swender, & Terry, 2002).

Both the National Standards and the Proficiency Guidelines have influenced the way foreign language professionals view language learning and assessment. With course objectives and clear-cut measures of improvement in mind, instructional and assessment procedures may be created to achieve the ACTFL Standards in weaker curricular areas (LeLoup & Ponteiro, 1997).

The underlying purpose of the ACTFL Standards is to measure what the students know and can do with the foreign language (ACTFL, 1996) and the fundamental purpose of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines is to describe how well students should perform in the language they are learning (ACTFL, 2012, 2001). The ACTFL National Standards are presented in Appendix A and the Proficiency Guidelines for the Intermediate Level are in Appendix B. For a complete list of the Proficiency Guidelines, visit [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org).

### **Assumptions**

This articulation agreement is also based on the following assumptions:

1. The foreign language curriculum at the Community Colleges and at the Four-Year Institutions in Pennsylvania is framed around the ACTFL National Standards and the Proficiency Guidelines.
2. The assessments of language proficiency are performance-based.
3. Oral proficiency, along with reading, and writing proficiencies are at the heart of foreign language programs at the Community Colleges and the Four-Year Institutions.
4. Students pursuing an Associate of Arts in a foreign language at a Community College may not have taken any language courses in high school.
5. The minimum level of language proficiency of a Community College graduate (60 credits) with an Associate of Arts degree in a foreign (Romance) language is Intermediate-Low as described by the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

### **Foreign Language Competencies and Foundations**

A student with an Associate of Arts degree in a foreign (Romance) language from a Community College in Pennsylvania who wants to pursue a Bachelor's of Arts in a foreign (Romance) language at a Four-Year Institution must be able to perform the following learning outcomes at the Intermediate-Low level minimum in speaking, reading and writing (See description of the Intermediate-Low level in Appendix B).

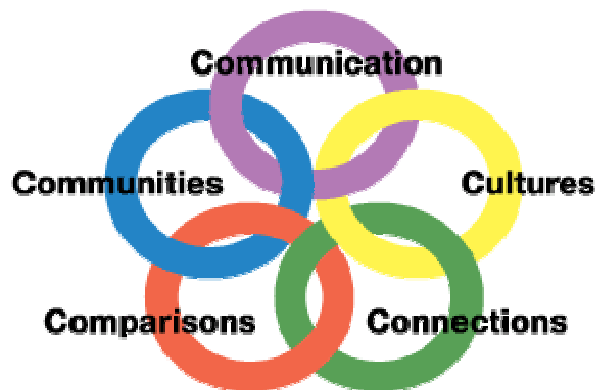
1. Ask simple questions about \*familiar topics using a variety of question words. (ACTFL 1.1 Communication)
2. Answer simple questions about familiar topics using sentence level discourse. (ACTFL 1.1 Communication)
3. Write ideas about familiar topics using simple sentences in the present tense. (ACTFL 1.3 Communication)
4. Engage orally in a simple transaction (i.e., order from a menu, request information, give directions, etc). (ACTFL 5.1 Communities & 3.1 Connections)
5. Demonstrate basic understanding of key products, practices and perspectives of the target culture. (ACTFL 2.1, 2.2 Cultures)
6. Identify main ideas from authentic materials presented for viewing, reading or listening. (ACTFL 1.2 Communication & 3.1 Connections)
7. Create new ideas orally or in writing based on previous information. (ACTFL 1.3 Communication)
8. Produce oral language clearly enough that a sympathetic listener is able to understand. \*self, hobbies, family, school, food, health, community (PSMLA, 2011).

### **Other Foundations**

As a result of the General Education studies (Core studies), the student must be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of cultures other than the student's own culture. (ACTFL 2.1, 2.2 Culture; Comparisons 4.1, 4.2)
2. Present ideas in writing using specific protocols (i.e., MLA writing standards). (ACTFL 1.3 Communications)
3. Present information orally using effective communication strategies. (1.3 Communication)
4. Implement critical thinking strategies to solve problems and/or to create new ideas.
5. Demonstrate an interest in lifelong learning of the target language and its culture. (ACTFL Communities 5.2)

## Appendix A: ACTFL STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING



### COMMUNICATION

#### Communicate in Languages Other Than English

- **Standard 1.1:** Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions
- **Standard 1.2:** Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics
- **Standard 1.3:** Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

### CULTURES

#### Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

- **Standard 2.1:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied
- **Standard 2.2:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

### CONNECTIONS

#### Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

- **Standard 3.1:** Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language
- **Standard 3.2:** Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures

### COMPARISONS

#### Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

- **Standard 4.1:** Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own
- **Standard 4.2:** Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

### COMMUNITIES

#### Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World

- **Standard 5.1:** Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting
- **Standard 5.2:** Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

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## **Appendix B: ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for the Intermediate Level**

### **SPEAKING**

#### **INTERMEDIATE HIGH**

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

#### **INTERMEDIATE MID**

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services.

When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

### **INTERMEDIATE LOW**

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

## **WRITING**

### **INTERMEDIATE HIGH**

Writers at the Intermediate High sublevel are able to meet all practical writing needs of the Intermediate level. Additionally, they can write compositions and simple summaries related to work and/or school experiences. They can narrate and describe in different time frames when writing about everyday events and situations. These narrations and descriptions are often but not always of paragraph length, and they typically contain some evidence of breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level. For example, these writers may be inconsistent in the use of appropriate major time markers, resulting in a loss of clarity. The vocabulary, grammar, and style of Intermediate High writers essentially correspond to those of the spoken language. Intermediate High writing, even with numerous and perhaps significant errors, is generally comprehensible to natives not used to the writing of non-natives, but there are likely to be gaps in comprehension.

### **INTERMEDIATE MID**

Writers at the Intermediate Mid sublevel are able to meet a number of practical writing needs. They can write short, simple communications, compositions, and requests for information in loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and other personal topics. Their writing is framed in present time but may contain references to other time frames. The writing style closely resembles oral discourse. Writers at the Intermediate Mid sublevel show evidence of control of basic sentence structure and verb forms. This writing is best defined as a collection of discrete sentences and/or questions loosely strung together. There is little evidence of deliberate organization. Intermediate Mid writers can be understood readily by natives used to the writing of non-natives. When Intermediate Mid writers attempt Advanced-level writing tasks, the quality and/or quantity of their writing declines and the message may be unclear.

### **INTERMEDIATE LOW**

Writers at the Intermediate Low sublevel are able to meet some limited practical writing needs. They can create statements and formulate questions based on familiar material. Most sentences are recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures. These are short and simple conversational-style sentences with basic word order. They are written almost exclusively in present time. Writing tends to consist of a few simple sentences, often with repetitive structure. Topics are tied to highly predictable content areas and personal information. Vocabulary is adequate to express elementary needs.

There may be basic errors in grammar, word choice, punctuation, spelling, and in the formation and use of non-alphabetic symbols. Their writing is understood by natives used to the writing of non-natives, although additional effort may be required. When Intermediate Low writers attempt to perform writing tasks at the Advanced level, their writing will deteriorate significantly and their message may be left incomplete.

## **READING**

### **INTERMEDIATE HIGH**

At the Intermediate High sublevel, readers are able to understand fully and with ease short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge. These readers are also able to understand some connected texts featuring description and narration although there will be occasional gaps in understanding due to a limited knowledge of the vocabulary, structures, and writing conventions of the language.

### **INTERMEDIATE MID**

At the Intermediate Mid sublevel, readers are able to understand short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge, although some misunderstandings may occur. Readers at this level may get some meaning from short connected texts featuring description and narration, dealing with familiar topics.

### **INTERMEDIATE LOW**

At the Intermediate Low sublevel, readers are able to understand some information from the simplest connected texts dealing with a limited number of personal and social needs, although there may be frequent misunderstandings. Readers at this level will be challenged to derive meaning from connected texts of any length.

Retrieved from [http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf) on 12/01/2011

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