Project Year

2013-2014

Project Title

German Online Placement Exam

Project Team

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Audience

1) All incoming students into the German program. Students who have previous knowledge of German are required to take an online placement test to choose the appropriate course. 2) Students who wish to have a foreign language requirement waived must take an expanded placement test. 3) Applicants for Fulbright and DAAD grants. Additional stakeholders include the German faculty and advising.

Pedagogical Challenge

The previous online German commercial placement test used by the program is no longer available to us due to increased cost. As well, it lacked listening comprehension, writing and speaking components and was not aligned with our course content. Creating a reliable, stable, easily accessible and computer gradable placement test is vital for the program. Timeliness is a factor as a new test must be in place by summer 2014.

Solution

The solution is to create a new online placement test for incoming German students, as well as grant applicants, using Blackboard as the delivery platform. The new test will improve upon the previous test used, by developing a listening comprehension section and optional writing and speaking components for proficiency testing.

From the technical side, the test must have an appropriate and stable system for delivery. Since Blackboard is known to be stable and has an expert team of University staff providing support, we will use Blackboard for this project. The creation will require numerous steps, including the development and piloting of all test items. Creating test items which align with our courses is preferable to using a test created by an outside vendor.

Faculty Statement

In the past the German program has used a commercial online placement test developed some years ago at Brigham Young University. However, it does not test listening comprehension, writing or speaking, nor is it aligned with the Hopkins curriculum. This test program has recently been sold to a new vendor who increased the price significantly. We cannot continue to use the product given the cost. A new online test must in place by summer 2014. We are looking to develop our own placement test that can be delivered and graded online and is aligned to our own courses and levels of German instruction. The technology fellow who will work on this project is a native speaker of German, currently teaching in the language program, and has relevant computer programming skills. We expect to use Blackboard for this project because of its stability and flexibility. The tech fellow will assist me in creating test items, particularly those which have a technology component such as audio and video files. As the faculty member responsible for the content, I will be writing most of the test items (vocabulary,

idioms, structure questions, etc.) and delivering the content to the fellow. I will also be involved in the piloting of the test. Once the test is developed and implemented, Blackboard allows for easy maintenance and updating of the content–important considerations as we want to insure sustainability and longevity.