

## Institutional Responses to Classical Language Students with Disabilities

At the presenter's university, students who have diagnosed disabilities affecting foreign language acquisition can seek accommodation on or substitution of the foreign language proficiency requirement. *Nota Bene*: the definition "foreign" languages includes classical languages. The university does not grant foreign language waivers to any students; instead the Council on Language Instruction has established a procedure that gives students who seek accommodation the possibility to work with a Language Proficiency Adviser (LPA). In order to have an LPA appointed, students must be registered and work with the university's Accessibility Center. This Center will forward their petition to the Language Proficiency Committee whose mission is to help students with disabilities affecting foreign language acquisition complete the requirement by overseeing their petitions for appropriate accommodations or substitute courses.

In this presentation the presenter intends to do three things:

- 1) Emphasize the importance of addressing the challenge posed by students with conditions adversely impacting the learning of a classical language at an institutional level. To this end, the presenter will describe in detail "how one mid-sized private university with a two-year language proficiency requirement has approached the problem to ensure that policies are implemented fairly." (Lys, May, Ravid 2014, 85) These findings demonstrate that institutional support not only maximizes the level of assistance that differently abled students receive to continue with learning a language but can also provide language instructors who lack experience and knowledge about what works and what doesn't with a cross-departmental forum where they can find help and advice.
- 2) Discuss the role and responsibilities of LPAs assigned to students who seek accommodation to complete their language proficiency requirement in Latin. Two specific cases

of students diagnosed with dyslexia and Asperger syndrome respectively will be presented. Both students had studied Latin for several years prior to college but only placed out of the first quarter of the elementary Latin sequence at the university. With the assistance of an LPA, not only they were able to successfully complete the remaining five quarters of Latin instruction without applying for substitution courses but also went on to declare a Latin minor and received a departmental prize as best Classics minors of the year. In order to demonstrate how working with an LPA helped these students strengthen their mastery of and confidence in their language skills the presenter will provide concrete examples of strategies that were developed or adopted by the LPAs during their one-to-one, out-of-class meetings with the students at both the elementary and intermediate level of Latin instruction.

3) Demonstrate that “while the focus of research is on students with disabilities, results also point to some common elements identified by students with and without disabilities. Several specific strategies were found to help language instructors begin to formulate inclusive practices “for the benefit of all second-language students, those with and without disabilities.” (Lys, May, Ravid 2014, 97) In addition to describing general best practices for inclusive classroom design, the presenter will provide specific examples of strategies for grammar learning and reading fluency that were designed for students who were experiencing extraordinary difficulties in learning Latin but proved to be beneficial to students without learning disabilities as well.

### Bibliography

Lys, Franziska, Alison May, and Jeanne Ravid. "A cross-departmental approach to supporting students with a disability affecting foreign language acquisition." *Prague Journal of English Studies* 3.1 (2014): 85-111.

