

## ***FAQs concerning our language placement tests***

The ZFA uses on-screen placement tests for **Dutch, English, French, Italian, Russian, Swedish and Spanish**.

For **Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Polish and Turkish**, proficiency levels are determined at one central meeting with language instructors at the beginning of the semester. (as of *September 2015*)

### *Do I have to take the placement test?*

#### **YES...**

- ...even if you only have a **basic knowledge** of the language, but have not yet attended any courses in this language at the ZFA. The placement test will assign you to one of our course levels, appropriately matching your current knowledge to a respective level (ranging from A1- C1 in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- ...if you wish to attend an **English course**. Students who do so must **all** take the English language placement test. From experience we know that all people will have some sort of elementary knowledge in English.
- ...if you wish to take part in a comprehensive course at the ZFA which covers various levels. Students interested in taking an **intensive** course or a **subject specialized** course must also take the placement test.
- ...if you have successfully completed a **language course at a different university**, yet did **not** receive a **UNlcert®-certificate**. If this is the case, we recommend that you take a placement test, as the European Framework Reference levels are sometimes interpreted differently at different language centers.

#### **NO...**

- ...if you possess no prior knowledge of the language (**with the exception being English**). **Beginners with no prior knowledge** do not have to take part in the placement tests. Instead, they should sign up for a beginner course at the Campus Office directly.
- ...if you have successfully **completed** the appropriate **preceding course at the ZFA** (<http://www4.rz.ruhr-uni-bochum.de:8424/niveau/uebersicht/index.html.de>) in the past **two semesters**, you can likewise enrol directly at the Campus Office.

- ...if you have received a **UNlcert®** or a **standardized international language examination certificate in the past two years** (e.g. CELI, CNavT, DELE, DELF/DALF, IELTS, Swedex, TOEFL® or the Cambridge Language Certificate). The appropriate certificate has to be approved as an equivalent to the placement test before enrolment by a member of staff responsible for the respective language. (Contact details of staff can be found on the appropriate language's webpage.)

**Please take note:**

- Language **level certificates from the Abitur** or equivalent are not sufficient to excuse participants from taking the placement test. They merely give reference to the European Framework of Reference level which should have been taught at your school. They do not provide an appropriate reference for an individual's competence in that language.
- **Students of the Romanische Seminar (RS)** should refer to the RS website for details. (The ZFA staff are not able to answer your RS degree related questions).

*Do I have to register to take the placement test?*

**Registering** for the placement test is **required for all languages**.

You can find information about the registration process on the website of the ZFA under "Examination and Certificates">"Placement Tests" <http://www4.rz.ruhr-uni-bochum.de:8424/lehre/einstufung/index.html.de>.

*What should I bring to the placement test?*

Please bring your Student ID card. External applicants should present a valid form of identification.

*Can I prepare myself for a placement test?*

*Yes and no.* In general, **last minute revision is not recommended**, as language learning is a long term commitment. It is also not about achieving the highest possible result. With the help of the placement test, you will be matched up with the most appropriate language level to suit your capability. This will ensure you get the most out of the lessons during the semester.

Nevertheless, it can be often useful **to refresh your knowledge of the language**. This avoids students whose knowledge is a bit 'rusty' realising that they have been placed in an inappropriate group after a few weeks.

Furthermore, we recommend that you get used to the **format of the examination** in advance. The placement test usually takes the form of a **C-Test**, a specific kind of gap-filling test which you can find here <https://moodle.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/m/course/view.php?id=483>.

**Can a C-Test give a complete evaluation of my language competence?**

C-Tests are integrative written language tests which assess **overall language proficiency**. If you would like more in-depth information concerning the C-Tests, we recommend visiting the following website <http://www.c-test.de/deutsch/index.php>.

**What happens if I do not pass the placement test?**

The placement test is not a credited examination which can be passed or failed. It serves only to evaluate the level of your language competence with regards to the course levels offered by the ZFA (from A1 to C1 in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

**I have already taken a placement test, but could not attend a course at that time. Do I have to retake the test every semester?**

*Yes and no.* **The result of the placement test remains valid for two semesters.** For example, you could take the test for the summer semester and then enrol for a course during the following winter semester. However, if more than two semesters have passed since taking the placement test, you will have to retake the placement test.

**Does participation in the placement test automatically guarantee me a place on a course?**

*Unfortunately, no.* The procedure is as follows:

1. Your language competency will be initially evaluated by the placement test so that we can match you to a suitable offered course level.
2. Please make a note of your result, as you will not receive a confirmation email.
3. After receiving your result, you may sign up for a course corresponding to your level in the Campus Office (external applicants should enrol in the ZFA front office). Should there be more applicants than places, places will be filled in at random electronically and a waiting list will be created. (Please be patient – many applicants have received places as late as the second week of the course.)

**After completing the placement test, I feel like I have been given a language level that is too advanced for me. Can I sign up for a lower-level class?**

1. It is important to note that students often underestimate their own language ability after a prolonged break from study. Experience tells us that we tend to retain an ability to understand written and spoken forms of the language. Active language use is, in turn, reinforced and developed as soon as you restart taking lessons or are exposed to the language by other means (e.g through a Language Tandem). Therefore, it does not make sense for students who would consider their knowledge to be 'rusty' to be placed in a lower group in which they would be simply relearning things they already know.
2. The result of the placement test may not meet your expectations or reflect previous experience, however we know from experience that the vast majority of students are suitably placed following the test.

3. Moving to a lower group is only possible after consultation with a teacher or course coordinator. This is only carried out for justified reasons during the first two weeks of the lecture period.
4. The ZFA tries to arrange groups, not only to match up students of similar levels, but also to ensure that credit points are awarded fairly to match a student's capability.

*I did not pass the preceding course but would like to take the follow-on course at a higher level. Can I take the placement test to see if I qualify?*

Yes. However, you should consult with your previous teacher or somebody responsible for the appropriate language beforehand to ensure that such a course of action would be appropriate for you.

Please take note: The placement test does **not serve** as an opportunity to **retake a semester exam**. You will not receive credit points or a certificate of participation (Bescheinigung) for the placement test. (You can find out about possibilities to retake examinations on the ZFA language pages, by enquiring with your teacher or at the ZFA front office).

*Concluding remark:*

In order to ensure that the information we share with you is precise and relevant, this FAQ list will be regularly updated. We always welcome your input (to [anna.timukova@rub.de](mailto:anna.timukova@rub.de)).

*Dr. Astrid Reich, Anna Timukova, Teresa Unterberg  
Prüfen, Testen, Zertifizieren  
Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung (ZFA)  
Ruhr-Universität Bochum*