FAQ for Statewide Latin Course Learning Outcomes

This FAQ addresses the specific concerns of faculty with oversight for Beginning and Intermediate Latin courses.

Unlike other Phase I to Phase IV languages, the main focus of Beginning and Intermediate Latin courses is the Interpretive Reading mode. In this course, students learn grammar, vocabulary, and structures to enable them to meet functional performance goals at each level and to build a foundation for continued language learning. To qualify for TAG, at least 70% of the classroom instructional time, up to 100%, has to be spent on the essential Interpretive Reading learning outcome.

Beginning and Intermediate Latin courses may also commonly include some of the optional learning outcomes in the other modes: Interpersonal Communication, Interpretive Listening/Viewing, and Presentational Speaking and Writing.

These optional modes should be included if there is adequate course time to do so beyond giving primary course attention to the essential learning outcome. The optional learning outcomes are learning experiences that enhance, reinforce, enrich or are further applications of the essential Interpretive Reading learning outcome.

How do the Essential and Non-Essential Learning Outcomes take performance-level variation into account?

- The main focus of Beginning and Intermediate Latin courses is the Interpretive Reading Mode. The Non-Essential Learning Outcome ("Students will be working toward . . .") of the Interpretive Reading mode at each course level is a "preview" of the material that will be covered in the following course and encourages learners and instructors to use language at the next higher level some of the time. By the end of the next course, students should be able to demonstrate that they can meet these same expectations, now the Essential Learning Outcome, most of the time.
- The Optional Non-Essential Learning Outcomes of the other Modes (Interpersonal Communication, Interpretive Listening/Viewing, and Presentational Speaking and Writing) may be applied if the instructor believes essential to incorporate them as in-class or out-of-class activities.
- There is flexibility in meeting the Learning Outcomes based on time and intensity of programs.
- Bridge or intensive programs, as well as sections for false beginners (those who have previous instruction in the language), will adjust the pace accordingly.
- Basing courses on familiar topics and contexts, as well as incorporating a lot of repetition and practice with linguistic content and culturally appropriate ways of interacting into instruction, will enable students in beginning courses to reach the upper Novice range. By definition, then they are able to meet a few of the Learning Outcomes in the Intermediate range.
- Similarly, students in the upper Beginning range, by definition, can also perform a few tasks in the Intermediate range, again with lots of repetition and practice. For example, it is quite

common for programs to introduce students to description and narration in the past as early as Beginning Course I; yet, this is an Intermediate competency. Students can perform such a task in guided, controlled situations in familiar contexts with familiar topics. Because of the exponential manner, rather than arithmetic, in which language competence develops, students in the elementary range will not be able to sustain description and narration in the past across a broad range of contexts and topics. Hence, they are not yet proficient at this level.

Useful Resources
- The American Classical League
- The Standards for Classical Language Learning
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment (ALIRA)
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Performance Descriptors

How is culture addressed in the Learning Outcomes?
- The study of ancient cultures is deeply intertwined with the study of classical languages. Culture is interwoven into each of the Modes of Communication. Through the target language, students examine the relationship among products, practices, and perspectives to demonstrate an understanding of the target culture(s). Students also enhance their understanding by making cultural comparisons and developing cultural insights. Communicating about what people believe, what they do, and what they use or make enables learners to understand authentic cultural contexts which define acceptable language and behavior.
- Integration across the modes leads to inextricable linkages between language and culture. Language always occurs in a cultural context.
- Students need many guided opportunities to practice language in order to perform in culturally appropriate ways. They learn the extent and limits so as not to overgeneralize. As with language learning, this is a gradual process.
- It is beyond the scope of the Learning Outcomes to list out specific products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture(s). These will be predicated on the topics, themes, and contexts addressed in a given program. The Alignment Guides provide many suggested ways to integrate language and culture.

Useful resources
- Pages 29 – 38 of the revised Standards for Classical Language Learning have additional suggestions on how to integrate language and culture.

How do the Learning Outcomes help programs identify specific grammar, structures, and vocabulary?
- It is beyond the scope of the TAG program to list specific grammar, structures, or vocabulary. That said, in order to perform the functions of the Learning Outcomes, students will certainly need to know and be able to use linguistic and cultural content. Specific content will be predicated on the contexts, tasks, and topics chosen by individual programs as suggested in the Alignment Guides. It is the instructor's role to draw students' attention to linguistic features of the target language and to have them practice using structures,

grammar, and vocabulary in meaningful ways. For example, consider the Beginning Interpretive Reading Learning Outcome #1:

    a. Students can recognize and identify the ways individual Latin words change their forms/endings to convey their grammatical function in a Latin sentence.

    b. Students begin to use context cues given by other words in sentences or passages for basic comprehension.

    c. Students will demonstrate their comprehension of simple sentences and passages through translation and other measures of understanding using their knowledge of morphology and syntax.

In order to successfully complete this Outcome, students should be able to do some of the suggested sample contexts, tasks, and topics:

    i. Demonstrate understanding of familiar words, phrases, a few idiomatic expressions, short sentences (e.g., description of family and social relationships, basic political concepts related to Rome, significant individuals and events in Roman history).

    ii. Identify features that enable them to interpret different kinds of very simple texts (e.g., poetry, prose, graffiti, inscriptions).

    iii. Demonstrate understanding of the main idea and a few details in texts that concern people, places, and things (e.g., personal characteristics, rooms in a house, ancient cities, articles of clothing).

    iv. Demonstrate understanding of the main idea and a few details in very simple sentences that introduce them to the target language culture(s) (e.g., myths, politics, social and religious practices, history, literature).

    v. Identify, explain the syntax, and translate very simple texts (e.g., practicing sentences, practicing adapted examples of original Latin).

    vi. Demonstrate understanding of the main idea and a few details about products, practices, and perspectives of the target language culture(s) in very simple, short texts.

- The ability to perform the functions outlined in the Learning Outcomes grows more sophisticated as students add more structures, grammar, and vocabulary to their linguistic repertoires.
- Rubrics help instructors measure if students know and can use grammar, structures, and vocabulary.
- Most children intuitively know the syntax of their first language by the time they enter first grade. Students continue to acquire vocabulary and hone spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation skills throughout their studies and into adulthood. Similar to second language abilities, first language functioning becomes more sophisticated as students are exposed to a greater variety of texts and practice applying extracted "ways with words" in their own communications. Consequently, it is unrealistic to assume that students will use their mother tongue perfectly and control all the nuances of their native language as they enter our courses. The beauty of learning another language, however, is captured in Goethe's famous quote: "*Anyone that doesn't know foreign languages knows nothing of his own.*" The attention to form and function in our courses enables students to take another look at how their own language works. Studies consistently point to the cognitive and academic benefits of second language learning.

- [New Hampshire Latin Standards,](#) Competencies and Performance Activities/Assessments.
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [Latin Interpretive Reading Assessment](#) (ALIRA)

How do the Learning Outcomes take textbooks and authentic materials into account?
- The Learning Outcomes are textbook and materials neutral.
- No one resource suffices to ensure that students can meet the expectations set forth in the Learning Outcomes. Instructors will need to supplement a course textbook with a variety of authentic materials if not already included (maps, photos or illustrations of artifacts, poetry, prose, graffiti, inscriptions, or video clips).
- It is the task, not the text, that needs to be level appropriate. Through guided instruction (pre-, during, and post-reading/listening/viewing activities), even beginning language learners can demonstrate understanding of the main idea and a few details.
- Programs are encouraged to make language learning relevant and interesting to students by incorporating a variety of materials into instruction. For example, if your textbook chapter focuses on Roman open-air markets, you might wish to find a map with information about Roman shipping routes and present the names of important cities, products typically exchanged, and the types of vessels used. You could then compare them with a few modern archaeological sites.

Useful Definitions:
- **Authentic materials**: Language samples taken from print or digital texts and media created by native speakers for native speakers that instructors use for instructional purposes. These might include maps, illustrations, photos or illustrations of artifacts, poetry, prose, graffiti, or inscriptions.
- **Semi-scripted materials**: Print or digital texts and media created by native or very proficient speakers for language learners that relate to specific topics or themes under study. Creators familiarize themselves with the vocabulary, structures, grammar, and cultural points under study and combine in ways likely to be found in the target culture.
- **Textbook materials**: Print or digital texts and media created by textbook authors to introduce and practice specific vocabulary, structures, grammar, and cultural points. Creators carefully sequence content and consciously recycle previously taught elements into subsequent chapters.

- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. [Use of Authentic Texts in Language Learning](#)

How do the Learning Outcomes address topics and techniques?
It is beyond the scope of the Learning Outcomes to list out specific topics or teaching techniques that must be incorporated into courses.

- The Alignment Guides provide many familiar topics, themes, and contexts likely to be addressed in beginning and intermediate language courses. Individual programs may modify these suggestions as needed. The abbreviation "e.g." means "for example;" "including" is abbreviated "i.e."
- Students respond to language that is meaningful and personalized. If instructors dissuade students by saying, "We'll get to that topic in another chapter," rather than seizing teachable moments, they miss serendipitous opportunities to connect language to students.
- Even in a beginning I course, while not an anticipated outcome, students may, on occasion, be able to create with language, especially if they have a repertoire of highly practiced language on which to draw. In fact, on particular topics or in particular contexts, novice learners may be at the high end of the performance range and can create with language half of the time. If you as an instructor are in the habit of making small talk with students based on their interests and current happenings, this is very likely to occur. For example, a typical exchange in the Interpersonal Communication mode might be as follows:
  I: "What are some typical foods in a Roman market?"
  S: "Meats, fish, cheeses, produce, olive oil and spices"
  I: "What are your favorite foods that are found in the market?"
  S: "(name of foods)"
- Learning Outcomes do not address *how* instructors should teach to help students meet expectations. Instructors will need many diverse strategies to differentiate instruction based on students' learning styles and preferences.

Useful Resources
- The merits of living-language (i.e., oral, active) teaching methods: Why speak Latin?
- See: When Dead Tongues Speak: Teaching Beginning Greek and Latin: Society for Classical Studies Classical Resources. Ed. John Gruber-Miller. Oxford University Press, 2006.

How do the Learning Outcomes differ by Mode?
- The Learning Outcomes are differentiated based on the Modes.
- The main focus of Beginning and Intermediate Latin courses is the Interpretive Reading mode. Students learn grammar, vocabulary, and structures to enable them to meet functional performance goals at each level and to build a foundation for continued language learning.
- If instructors wish to include the optional Interpretive or Presentational Modes, students usually can listen/view and understand more than they can produce on their own.
- If instructors wish to include communication in the target language (Interpersonal Mode) with frequent opportunities to interact with others, students become adept at sharing information and opinions, as well as in negotiating meaning.

Useful Resources
- Pages 8 – 24 of the revised Standards for Classical Language Learning have additional descriptions of the Modes of Communication.
- The Executive Summary of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, p. 5, Communication (1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics)

- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [Performance Descriptors](#)

How do the Learning Outcomes facilitate placement decisions?
- When students self-place, they often sign up for beginning courses despite having studied the language for two or more years in high school or for one or more semesters in college.
- If students can demonstrate that they can meet course learning outcomes either through some sort of placement test or grade in that course, they should be placed into the next higher course.
- Institutions might choose to use the Learning Outcomes to create placement tests to ensure that students start the language sequence in the most appropriate course given their language background.