

ACTR “Russian Program of Excellence” (RPE) Standards

The following RPE program standards represent a significant revision of those developed originally through the Partnerships for Language in the U.S. (PLUS) initiative, a national effort originally intended to support rigorous peer review and ultimately accreditation of language programs in higher education. They are based on AATG’s Program of Excellence, with insights from the Commission on English Language Accreditation (CEA).

ACTR recognizes the importance of providing students in higher education with an opportunity to develop the types of global skills that will make them competitive in their career pursuits. Meeting the highest level of standards in learning another language and building practical experience with another cultural milieu is a necessary ingredient in becoming a global professional. ACTR attests that RPE students have language and cultural knowledge, skills and abilities that provide enhanced opportunities in skills certification, graduate education, employment and global mobility.

A Russian Program of Excellence recognized by ACTR:

- Serves the needs of all students according to their motivation and preparation;
- Promotes best practices in language as well as international & cultural education;
- Documents quality through a transparent and standards-based process;
- Is based on learning outcomes rather than teaching inputs;
- Rigorously assesses language proficiency outcomes according to national standards;
- Directly involves faculty and staff in self-assessment and continuous quality improvement processes;
- Is committed to rigorous and practical overseas study including internships, preferably related to their field of study.

In order to implement a comprehensive evaluation system for language programs, standards must be comprehensive enough to ensure that students are educated in a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviors that address all the qualifications needed for communication and interaction in today’s global environments. Modeled on the AATG Program of Excellence initiative with insight provided by nationally recognized ABET (Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology) program certification process and Commission for English Language Accreditation, the following are the criteria against which programs will be evaluated in ACTR’s RLPE:

STANDARDS

Russian Programs of Excellence (RPE)

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR BACCALAUREATE LEVEL PROGRAMS

Criterion 1: Program

An exemplary Russian program should have a clearly defined mission and program objectives, which are supported by the institution, its faculty and students. It should reflect the world in which we live and be a source of guidance for programming, for hiring, and for morale.

Specific criteria:

Stability

1. The program is well-established, having been in existence for at least five years.
2. The program is stable or growing in the number of students involved.
3. The program has a published mission statement and educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution, the needs of the program's various constituencies, and these criteria.
4. The program has a documented, systematically utilized, and effective process, involving program constituencies, for the periodic review of educational objectives that ensures they remain consistent with the institutional mission, the program's constituents' needs, and these criteria.
5. The program's educational objectives meet the needs of its student constituencies, including majors and non-majors, students from other disciplines, as well as the new generation of entering students.
6. The program is strongly supported by the administration, the governing body, colleagues, students, parents, and alumni.

Continuous Improvement

7. The program takes advantage of institutional resources to meet the goals and mission of the program.
8. The program has and/or seeks internal or external source of funding for continuing support. Faculty and program leaders are actively involved in recruiting and mentoring future supporters of the program.
9. The program engages in self-evaluation and sets future goals. The program collects feedback from stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, community members, etc.).
10. The program has strong leadership that ensures rigor, transparency, accountability, and a supportive community.
11. Faculty and program leaders consider new and emerging challenges and explore potential solutions and best practices on an ongoing basis.

Nurturing Students & Faculty

12. The teacher–student ratio is appropriate for the age of the students and the level of instruction.
13. The program’s extra-curricular activities and/or special events are a part of school/campus life.
14. There is consistent institutional support for all faculty to continue their professional development.

Outreach

15. The program has an ongoing visible presence in the school or on campus (displays, posted materials, school newspaper, awards programs, etc.) showing the institution’s dedication to the Russian program.
16. There is cooperation with other educational institutions supporting articulation in the target language and culture.
17. The program shows strong ties to the greater community. Native speakers are encouraged to participate in the program.
18. The program has potential as a model for other Russian programs and/or foreign language programs.

Criterion Two: Faculty.

Exemplary Russian programs should have faculty with credentials in Russian appropriate to their teaching assignment. There should be clear evidence of continuing faculty development at the local, state, and national levels. All faculty should have the opportunity for regular collaboration. The faculty–student ratio should be appropriate to the level of instruction.

Specific Criteria:

Coverage:

1. The faculty must be of sufficient number and must have the competencies to cover all of the curricular areas of the program.
2. There must be sufficient faculty to accommodate adequate levels of student-faculty interaction, student advising and counseling, university service activities, professional development, and interactions with industrial and professional practitioners, as well as employers of students.

Credentials

3. The program faculty must have appropriate qualifications and must have and demonstrate sufficient authority to ensure the proper guidance of the program and to develop and implement processes for the evaluation, assessment, and continuing improvement of the program, its educational objectives and outcomes.
4. Each member of the instructional staff holds the appropriate degree or teaching certification in Russian or has received additional professional training necessary to his/her teaching assignment (a minimum of Advanced Low proficiency).

5. The overall competence of the faculty may be judged by such factors as education, diversity of backgrounds, language and communication experience, teaching effectiveness and experience, ability to communicate, societies, and—where relevant—certification in one or more languages.
6. University faculty must be appropriately balanced between tenure-track faculty with appropriate participation in self-governance and adjunct faculty.
7. Each faculty member has knowledge of and/or experience in Russia and in the broader Russian diaspora

Development

8. Each faculty member engages in continuing professional development and has clear personal professional development goals.
9. All faculty collaborate frequently within and beyond the Russian program.
10. Faculty members use innovative, active, and effective instructional methods.
11. Faculty members are active members of ACTR.

Outreach

12. Faculty members are involved in their professional organizations at several levels: local and/or state; national and/or international professional conferences and/or seminars.
13. Faculty members communicate regularly with stakeholders (e.g., students, parents) concerning student success and needs.
14. Faculty members have a good rapport with their students (e.g., supporting extracurricular activities, mentoring, serving as advisor).

Criterion 3: Students

All students should be welcomed and accommodated in a program that prepares a diverse and linguistically capable cadre of graduates intending to advance their personal and professional lives. Language proficiency and cultural performance goals should be clearly communicated and assessed for all students: majors and non-majors, native-English speakers and heritage learners. Previous experience with Russian (FLES, dual language immersion, home usage, classroom instruction, in-country immersions) should be acknowledged, diagnosed and accommodated within the program and curriculum.

Specific Criteria:

Academic Credit:

1. The program must enforce policies for accepting both new and transfer students, diagnosing and placing students in appropriate courses, acknowledging AP/NEWL testing, awarding appropriate academic credit for courses taken at other institutions, and awarding appropriate academic credit for work in lieu of courses taken at the institution.
2. The program must have and enforce procedures to ensure and document that

students who graduate meet all graduation requirements.

Student Outcomes:

3. The program must have documented student outcomes that prepare graduates to attain the program educational objectives. Student outcomes are outcomes (a) through (o) plus any additional outcomes that may be articulated by the program.

(a) documented language proficiency in accordance with announced program goals for majors and non-majors; as defined by ILR, ACTFL, CEFR, TORFL or another nationally or internationally recognized proficiency scale (ISO 29991:2013)

(b) ability to design and conduct language maintenance and enhancement as necessary throughout the professional career

(c) understanding of general as well as culture-specific concepts, behaviors, and beliefs

(d) ability to assess and use translation and interpretation services effectively and efficiently

(e) ability to identify, formulate, and solve communications problems

(f) understanding of professional and ethical responsibility

(g) ability to communicate effectively in one's native language

(h) broad education necessary to understand the impact of effective communications in a global, political, social, economic, environmental, and societal context

(i) recognition of the need for, and an ability to engage in life-long learning

(j) knowledge of contemporary issues

(j) ability to use the techniques, skills, and modern technologies & tools necessary for cross-cultural communications

(k) Knowledge of a area or region of the world and an overview of global issues

(l) Critical thinking skills

(m) Technical skills in a discipline

(n) ability to function on multidisciplinary teams

Criterion 4: Curriculum.

The curriculum requirements specify subject areas appropriate to global communications but do not prescribe specific courses. The faculty must ensure that the program curriculum devotes adequate attention and time to each component, consistent with the outcomes and objectives of the program and institution, including:

- (a) language acquisition program aimed at announced proficiency outcomes
- (b) specified program of courses for majors and non-majors designed to convey the culture of a specific area of the world, to include the performance and achievement cultures of the Russian-speaking world
- (c) specified program of area studies courses for majors and non-majors focused on the Russian-speaking world
- (d) conscious understanding and appreciation of cultural differences between native and other cultures
- (e) a general education component that complements the language and culture content of the curriculum and is consistent with the program and institution objectives.

Specific Criteria

Design

1. The curriculum is standards-based and organized around student needs.
2. Goals for target language proficiency are clearly stated and assessed.
3. A smooth, clear sequence of articulated instruction with expectations and outcomes at each instructional level is clearly defined and is evident between instructional levels.
4. The curriculum clearly reflects current methodologies in foreign language education.
5. Instructional materials and classroom routines are culturally authentic and age appropriate.
6. Meaningful cultural activities are integrated into all instructional levels.
7. The curriculum integrates differentiated instruction (e.g., multiple intelligences) through all instructional levels.
8. Domestic and overseas language immersion experiences are available to all students, to the extent possible
9. These immersion experiences are integrated before and after into the regular curriculum.
10. Current media and technology are an integral part of the program and used to differentiate instruction. Media centers and other resources are available to students in support of the curriculum and their learning.
11. The curriculum reflects the application of content to real-world situations through various communication methods.

Assessment

12. All students are assessed regularly and assessments reflect best practices for the instructional context (e.g., differentiated assessments reflecting diverse learners).
13. Assessment results reflect above average student performance.

Outreach

14. The curriculum draws clear connections to a variety of disciplines (e.g., German across the curriculum, STEM, etc.) and addresses students' interests.
15. Curriculum development is an on-going activity incorporating student feedback, administrative direction, instructor experience, and current educational trends.
16. The curriculum is well-articulated with the curriculum at other institutions and promotes life-long learning.

Criterion 5. Facilities

Classrooms, offices, laboratories, and internet access must be adequate to support attainment of the student outcomes and to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning.

1. Modern tools, internet, computing resources, and laboratories appropriate to the program must be available, accessible, and systematically maintained and upgraded to enable students to attain the student outcomes and to support program needs. Students must be provided appropriate guidance regarding the use of the tools, internet, computing resources, and laboratories available to the program.
2. The library services and the computing and information infrastructure must be adequate to support the scholarly and professional activities of the students and faculty.

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