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Dean Erika Lindemann
Office of Undergraduate Curricula
CB 3504

Dear Dean Lindemann:

I am writing to request a five-year extension, effective through academic year 2018-19, of a credit policy for introductory Japanese language which has been in place since 1995. According to this agreement, we have been allowing students who scored poorly on the Japanese placement exam to enroll in the first semester of Elementary Japanese (Japanese 101) for credit, even though they may have had two or more years of Japanese language classes in high school.

We believe that such students deserve credit for their first year of college level Japanese, due to the lack of standardization in high school language classes. Because Japanese is a "less commonly taught language" and there are few teacher training programs, many high school teachers of Japanese are not licensed or properly trained. As a result, the quality of instruction and students' proficiency levels across programs are more uneven than in other language programs. Furthermore, since most of the instructors teaching Japanese in North Carolina high schools must work hard to interest students in taking this unfamiliar language at all, they tend to devote much class time to cultural information and entertaining activities that pique student interest but do not promote language skills. In any event, because Japanese is officially classified as a category 4 language, the most difficult category for native speakers of English, especially in terms of reading and writing, the pace of instruction in high school tends to be very slow. Of course, some high schools do offer excellent and demanding programs, and students from these programs tend to score well enough to place into the second semester or higher anyway. However, we do not wish to unfairly penalize those students who come to us with enthusiasm for further Japanese study, but have been in one of the less rigorous high school programs.

Sincerely,

Jan Bardsley
Chair
Department of Asian Studies