Anatolia College, an American, private, non-profit academic institution located in Thessaloniki, has been authorized to administer the MSU Certificate of English Language Competency (CELC) and the MSU Certificate of English Language Proficiency (CELP) examinations throughout northern Greece. DEREE - The American College of Greece in Athens has been authorized to administer the MSU-CELC and MSU-CELP examinations in southern Greece.

“English language centers in the U.S. are not rare,” says Dan Reed, “but it is rare to have a testing division as part of those centers. The main function of the testing division on the MSU campus is for testing and placement of all incoming admitted international students who have not met the English requirement. At MSU, one of the ways to meet the English requirement is by receiving the higher of the two certificates, namely CELP, which is comparable to meeting the minimum requirement for full admission on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).”

While the CELC is typically administered to 13-15 year olds, the CELP is usually given to those 15-18 as well as older adults. The majority of the students taking each exam are much younger than the population of examinees taking similar exams outside of Greece. Most are students who believe success on these exams will help them get a better job and increase future opportunities. Knowing this from the beginning, the ELC focused on ensuring its exams were age-appropriate, relevant, and of interest to this especially young population.

This adaptation was accomplished through the collaboration with Anatolia and DEREE and entailed extensive discussions, classroom observations, interviews, pilot testing, and the formation of a “cultural sensitivity committee” to check all test content. The initial process took two years, leading up to the 2009 launch of MSU Exams, and similar activities are conducted on a continuing basis to ensure that all new test forms are valid, reliable, and appropriate to the needs of the stakeholders.

CELC AND CELP

“Both of our Greek partner institutions are highly prestigious in Greece,” Reed says. “And the MSU CELC and the MSU CELP are recognized in Greece by the Supreme Council for the Selection of Personnel, or ASEP, which determines Greek civil service eligibility. The CELP is also used to determine eligibility to teach English.”

Reed notes that, in Greece, the English-language certificate industry is big business and highly privatized, with educational institutions being pitted against companies with a distinct profit motive.

As for the English Language Center’s programs in Greece, Reed says responsibilities are clearly delineated.

It’s all English to me

In spring 2009, the MSU English Language Center (ELC) kicked off its Greek testing program by administering English language competency and proficiency tests to 209 students in Greece. Since then, ELC director Susan Gass and head of testing and certification Daniel Reed have seen that figure rise to nearly 9,000 students annually at two institutions of higher learning in Greece.
SEPARATE RESPONSIBILITIES

“The MSU English Language Center develops, validates and scores the tests, and we train the oral examiners and raters,” Reed says. “The Greek institutions give the tests and handle administration and marketing. Each year, we develop new questions and new forms for the tests, and make sure they are printed locally and shipped to Greece.”

Reed adds that grad students in PhD programs and even faculty have performed research using the program’s data findings. They also find it valuable to get real-world test development experience.

“Members of our team also present annually at major conferences like TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), AAAL (American Association for Applied Linguistics), and the LTRC (Annual Language Testing Research Colloquium),” Reed says.

“And, this past April, Sue Gass and I presented in Paris at the fifth annual conference of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) on establishing fair testing practices through an intercultural collaboration between Greek and American educational institutions.”

Gass and Reed also wrote a chapter about the MSU program in Greece for the book English in Europe Today: Sociocultural and educational perspectives, titled English language testing: a case study of test development in Greece.

“What we’ve found, overall,” Reed says, “is that results of the ‘cram’ format of test preparation do not compare favorably to results of English language programs like MSU’s that stress truly using the cram schools.”

He adds, “Not only has our model worked, but the schools that take this approach say more students are passing.” When the ELC team travels to Greece, they often give presentations at semi-formal events that allow them to meet teachers and to encourage a “broad” approach to test preparation as opposed to the “narrow” approach of the cram schools.

“Our hope,” Reed says, “is that the whole testing program will have a positive impact on schools and students by resulting in a more communicative approach to the way languages are taught and learned.”

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER (ELC) http://elc.msu.edu/

The English Language Center (founded in 1961) is a unit in the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University. Its main mission is to provide instruction to international students who need to improve their English language skills before beginning academic course work. The ELC serves the international community by providing English language instruction against a backdrop of American life and academia. It also serves individuals who are not seeking a degree at MSU but who want to improve their English skills. Such students can apply directly to the English Language Center.

ANATOLIA COLLEGE http://www.anatolia.edu.gr/

Anatolia College was founded in 1886, incorporated in Massachusetts in 1894, and has been located in Thessaloniki, Greece, since 1924. Today, it welcomes 2,200 students in its three divisions: The American College of Thessaloniki (ACT), a U.S.-accredited and EU-validated four-year college; Anatolia High School (grades 7-12, day and boarding), which offers the prestigious International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in grades 11-12; and the Elementary School, grades K-6.

DEREE – THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GREECE http://www.acg.edu/

DEREE – The American College of Greece was founded in 1875, and is an independent, non-profit educational institution accredited by The New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Located in Aghia Paraskevi on the slopes of Mt. Hymettus, just 10 kilometers from the center of Athens, DEREe offers modern classrooms, an expansive library, and Olympic-quality athletic facilities. The college also has a convenient downtown campus in the heart of Athens. DEREe represents the finest in the American tradition of higher education in an international setting, offering a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees, graduate certificates, and continuing and professional studies courses. More than 3,500 students are currently enrolled in its undergrad and graduate programs.

More information on the English Language Center’s English language testing programs in Greece is available at: http://www.msu-exams.gr

Combined registration for CELC and CELP, spring 2009 through spring 2014

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