



12 January 2012

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**Information circular\***

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **Language and communications programme at Headquarters — 2012**

1. Language courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized to promote linguistic balance and multilingualism within the Secretariat and to improve the language capabilities of staff as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2480 B (XXIII), 43/224 D and 50/11. The courses provide the opportunity to learn the official languages of the Organization for use at work. For further career development, communications skills training provides hands-on practice for enhancing work-related writing and presentation skills.
2. The present circular includes information on registration procedures, the types of courses that are offered and the official policies of the United Nations Language and Communications Programme at Headquarters.
3. The present circular is provisional pending the receipt of information regarding the launch of a new learning management system through Inspira. In addition, the scheduled return of some offices to the Secretariat Building may affect the logistics of the registration process.

**I. Course calendar for 2012**

4. The Language and Communications Programme offers three terms per year, which in 2012 are as follows:

*January 2012 term*

Language classes	3 January-23 March
End-of-term examinations	26-30 March

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\* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 2012.



*April 2012 term*

Language classes 16 April-6 July

End-of-term examinations 9-13 July

*September 2012 term*

Language classes 10 September-30 November

End-of-term examinations 3-7 December

## II. Registration

### Eligibility

5. United Nations staff members at all levels at Headquarters with contracts valid through the end of the term may register for language courses free of charge, although students are responsible for purchasing any required textbooks or materials.

6. Those who are not United Nations staff members may still be eligible to take classes, either free of charge or for a modest fee (see para. 29 below). Information on eligibility is available on the Language and Communications Programme registration page at [www.un.org/staffdevelopment/lcp](http://www.un.org/staffdevelopment/lcp).

### Dates

7. Those eligible to take language classes may register in 2012 as follows:

*January 2012 term*

31 October-18 November 2011

*April 2012 term*

27 February-16 March 2012

*September 2012 term*

4-15 June 2012 and 20-31 August 2012

8. Registration applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis, and space in Language and Communications Programme courses is limited. Those who seek a particular course or schedule are advised to register early. Once a course is full, subsequent applicants are placed on a waiting list.

### Procedures

9. There are three ways to register for language classes.

*In-class registration*

10. Current students in regular- and accelerated-level courses can register in class, before the end-of-term examination, to take a regular- or accelerated-level course in the following term. Those registering in this way will be given priority to ensure

that they will be able to continue in the regular programme. Those who do not register in class risk being unable to obtain a space in a class the following term.

#### *Form-based registration*

11. New students, students returning after two terms and current students who wish to enrol in special courses may register during the registration period by dropping off the following two documents in the DC2 Building, in the box near room DC2-200, or at 380 Madison Avenue, room M-14001 (14th floor):

(a) A copy of their grounds pass, which must be valid until the end of the forthcoming term;<sup>1</sup>

(b) A completed registration form, which can be downloaded from the registration page of the Language and Communications Programme website (see para. 6 above).

#### *In-person registration*

12. During the registration period, students may register in person, from Monday to Friday, at the following times and locations:

(a) 1.30 to 3.30 p.m. in room DC2-200;

(b) 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in room M-14001.

#### **Placement exams**

13. A student must take a placement exam for a language if he or she is:

(a) A non-native speaker who is new to the programme and who has some knowledge of the language. Only beginners may enrol directly in level 1. Those who can provide proof of a very high proficiency in the language may contact the coordinator of that language to request a waiver of the requirement to take the exam;

(b) A returning student who has not taken a course in that language in the programme for two terms or more.

#### **Maximum number of courses per term**

14. To ensure the most effective language learning possible, the Language and Communications Programme encourages a focus on one language at a time.

15. Students can register for up to two courses per term in up to two languages: either one regular-level or accelerated course and one special course or two special courses.

16. Prior authorization from the head of the Language and Communications Programme is required to register within the same term for either two regular courses or more than two courses.

17. Work-related justifications will be given priority. Requests for more than one lunchtime course per day are subject to the provisions in paragraphs 47-49 below.

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<sup>1</sup> Students whose passes will expire before the end of the forthcoming term are requested to provide a letter from their supervisor indicating that their contract will be extended until the end of the term.

18. Students are encouraged to complete all regular-level courses in one language before taking a regular-level course in another language.

#### **Confirmation of enrolment**

19. Class lists will be prepared on the basis of priority policies and availability. Students are advised to confirm that they have been placed in a course by checking the lists posted on the Language and Communications Programme web page (see para. 6 above) the week before the beginning of each term. **Only students whose names are on the class list will be admitted into the course.** Those who register after a course is full will be placed on a waiting list. If a space becomes available within the first two weeks of a term, the students on the waiting list will be contacted immediately.

#### **Cancellation of registration**

20. To avoid having to pay an incomplete attendance fee (see para. 24 below), students are advised to cancel their registration early if they are likely to miss more than 25 per cent of the lessons of a course in which they are enrolled. Students may cancel by sending an e-mail to [languages@un.org](mailto:languages@un.org) before the end of the first two weeks of an 8- or 12-week course, or before the end of the first week for shorter courses. No cancellation is permitted after those deadlines.

#### **Absenteeism**

##### *No-show fee*

21. Students who will be absent during the first week of their course (regardless of when their classes begin in the term) must inform their teachers and the coordinator by e-mail of their planned absence. This notification must be received by the end of the first week at the latest. Those who do not inform their teachers and coordinator of their planned absence or who do not cancel their registration will be:

- (a) Considered a no-show;
- (b) Removed from the class list at the end of the first week;
- (c) Charged a no-show fee of \$100.

22. Coordinators will then invite students on the waiting list to attend the course. Students who are absent without notification cannot request that the no-show fee be waived for any reason. The fee is waived automatically, however, if students leave a gap of two terms before returning to the language programme (in that case, students will be required to take a placement exam again).

23. The no-show fee is due at the time of registration (whether in-person or form-based) for students who register for any language course in one of the next two terms, and proof of payment must be submitted along with the registration form and a copy of the grounds pass. For payment information, see paragraph 34 below.

##### *Incomplete attendance fee*

24. To ensure that the Organization is able to provide training to the maximum number of staff who will be able to attend regularly, the Language and Communications Programme charges an incomplete attendance fee of \$100 to

students who wish to continue taking any courses in the programme and who had low attendance in one of the two previous terms, that is, if they:

(a) Stopped attending a course after the first two weeks of the term (even if they informed their teacher and/or coordinator);

(b) Attended less than 75 per cent of the course lessons (all types of courses) and, for those who were in regular or accelerated courses, failed the end-of-term examination.

25. The incomplete attendance fee may be waived by the head of the Language and Communications Programme only if a student does any one of the following:

(a) Leaves a gap of two terms before taking another course in any language (the student will be required to take a placement exam again);

(b) Provides a certificate of sick leave for three continuous weeks or more that occurred during the course;

(c) Submits an official letter or e-mail from a supervisor, clearly indicating the supervisor's title and contact information, explaining that the student:

(i) Was sent on a mission assignment of three weeks or more that he or she was not aware of at the time of registering for the class;

(ii) Had a change in work assignments that interfered with his or her ability to attend class.

26. The incomplete attendance fee is due at the time of registration (whether in-person or form-based) for students who register for any language course in one of the next two terms, and proof of payment must be submitted along with the registration form and a copy of the grounds pass. For payment information, see paragraph 34.

27. Current students, even if they indicated their choice to their teacher during in-class registration (see para. 10), will not be automatically registered for the forthcoming term if:

(a) They attended less than 75 per cent of the course lessons (all types of courses);

(b) For those who were in regular or accelerated courses, they also failed the end-of-term examination.

Such students must pay the incomplete attendance fee. As soon as the incomplete attendance fees have been paid or waived (see paras. 24 and 25), students will be listed in the course of their choice. Students are therefore advised to act promptly so as not to risk losing priority seating.

28. Students may be charged both an incomplete attendance fee and a no-show fee for two separate courses taken in one of the two previous terms.

### **Fees for paying students**

29. For paying students, the fee for each course is based on the number of hours of lessons, as follows:

72 hours (e.g. 6 hours per week for 12 weeks), \$600

- 60 hours (e.g. 5 hours per week for 12 weeks), \$550
- 48 hours (e.g. 4 hours per week for 12 weeks), \$500
- 36 hours (e.g. 3 hours per week for 12 weeks), \$450
- 30 hours (e.g. 2 hours and 30 minutes per week for 12 weeks), \$400
- 24 hours (e.g. 2 hours per week for 12 weeks), \$300
- 16-18 hours (e.g. 1 hour and 30 minutes per week for 12 weeks), \$200
- 12 hours (e.g. 1 hour per week for 12 weeks), \$150
- 6-8 hours (e.g. 1 hour per week for 6 weeks), \$100

For some courses, official United Nations holidays may affect the total number of hours.

30. Unless students have a credit balance from one of the two previous terms (see below), payment is due at the time of registration (whether in-person or form-based), and proof of payment must be submitted along with the registration form and a copy of the grounds pass. Students will not be able to register without providing proof of payment.

31. Payments due at the time of registration may include new fees for courses in the forthcoming term and outstanding fees due from any previous terms.

32. Paying students who wish to cancel their registration do not receive a refund for tuition fees, but rather receive credit that is valid for the two subsequent terms. Paying students still need to respect cancellation deadlines, however, as mentioned in paragraph 20 above. Paying students who want to cancel their registration after those deadlines will receive neither a refund nor a credit for courses in future terms.

33. Paying students who do not inform their teachers and coordinator by e-mail of their planned absence by the end of the first week of their course (regardless of when their classes begin in the term) will not be subject to a no-show fee. However, if such students do not show up at all within the two first weeks of their course, their registration will be cancelled for the term and neither a refund nor a credit will be given for courses in future terms.

#### **Forms of payment**

34. All payments should be made at the Cashier's Office (M-1900), located at 380 Madison Avenue, 19th floor, between 10 a.m. and 3.30 p.m., Monday to Friday. The Cashier's Office accepts only cash or cheques as payment; credit cards are not accepted. Students receive a proof of payment that they can bring to the office at the time of registration or send by e-mail to [languages@un.org](mailto:languages@un.org).

### **III. Language courses**

35. To help staff develop proficiency in a language, three types of language courses are offered each term: regular, accelerated and special.

**Regular courses**

36. Regular courses range from level 1 (beginner) to level 8 or 9 (advanced), depending on the language. The courses focus on all language skills — speaking, listening, writing, reading and interacting — and aim to develop both fluency and accuracy.

37. Regular courses meet for a total of three to four hours per week, depending on the language and level. Each lesson may last one, one and a half or two hours several times a week. Courses may be offered at the following times:

Before work: 8.30 a.m.

At lunch hour: 12, 12.30, 1, 1.30 and 2 p.m.

After work: 5.30 p.m. (6 p.m. during the main part of the General Assembly session)

38. During most terms there may be only one or two schedule options per level per language.

**Accelerated courses**

39. For those students who want to learn a language faster and have the time to do so, accelerated courses may be offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. As an example, accelerated classes may be offered five days a week from 8.20 to 9.30 a.m. This option is not available in all languages or at all levels.

**Special courses**

40. In response to students' interests and needs, the Language and Communications Programme offers special courses that focus on a particular language skill, task or topic. Such courses may meet for only one or two hours per week and may last for fewer than 12 weeks.

**IV. Communications skills training**

41. Communications skills training aims to improve work-related writing and presentation skills in the working languages of the Organization, namely English and French. This responds to the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for managing the Organization's human resources and other human resources management issues (see A/59/263).

42. Descriptions of the courses are provided in the Staff Development Programme booklet and on the Language and Communications Programme website at [www.un.org/depts/OHRM/sds/lcp](http://www.un.org/depts/OHRM/sds/lcp).

**Eligibility**

43. To participate in communications skills training, students must have a high level of proficiency in the language and have work duties that allow them to immediately apply what they are learning. For example, to participate in a course on the principles of report writing, one must currently write United Nations reports.

**Scheduling**

44. Writing courses may include a blend of both group lessons and individual tutoring sessions with the instructor.

45. Communications skills training may take place outside of the schedule for regular courses provided in paragraph 37.

**Department-requested training**

46. Departments of the United Nations Secretariat with staff who perform writing or speaking tasks that are linked to specialized fields (such as economics, accounting, security, peacekeeping, international law or human rights) that differ from those of other United Nations staff owing to specific guidelines, templates or other considerations can request the Language and Communications Programme to assist with the development of specialized work-related training. Financial participation from the requesting departments may be required. Further information can be obtained by contacting the coordinator of the relevant language programme.

**V. Additional information****Participants in lunchtime courses**

47. Staff members in New York are entitled to a one-hour lunch break, starting not earlier than 11.30 a.m. and ending not later than 3 p.m.

48. The 60 minutes allotted for lunch may also be used for in-house training opportunities (e.g. a 60-minute language class). Accordingly, staff members planning to enrol in classes scheduled for more than 60 minutes per session during lunchtime need to request their supervisor's approval.

49. Supervisors, taking into consideration the exigencies of service and the requests received from other staff members, are encouraged to consider approving requests for participation in lunchtime classes scheduled for more than 60 minutes as well as granting additional time to commute from the office to the location of the language class and to have a quick meal before or after a language class. Staff should note that such approval may require having to make up the time spent away from the office beyond the 60 minutes allotted for lunch, as determined by the supervisor.

**Course materials**

50. Course participants are responsible for purchasing any textbooks or other course materials, as instructed by the teacher on the first day of class. Required textbooks may be available for purchase under special arrangements with vendors or in the United Nations bookshop, located in room GA-032A in the General Assembly building.

**Assessment of learning***Regular and accelerated courses*

51. End-of-term examinations or alternative forms of assessment of learning (such as continuous evaluation) are an integral and mandatory part of the regular and



accelerated courses of the Language and Communications Programme. Students who do not take the form of assessment required to validate their level in a given course, even if they come to class on a regular basis within the term, will be subject to an incomplete attendance fee if they register for any language course in one of the next two terms, unless they submit in advance an adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator. The coordinator will then determine whether the work-related or unexpected reasons provided justify a make-up examination.

52. The dates and venues for the exams are made known at least two weeks in advance. End-of-term examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses. On the date of the examination or the course assessment, students are advised to come at least 10 to 15 minutes earlier than the appointed time. No extra time will be given to latecomers at the end of the scheduled examination period.

53. To advance to the next level, students must pass both the written and oral components of the end-of-term examination (the minimum passing score is 65 points out of 100), or a continuous evaluation if offered. Participants who fail the examination may arrange to have a general discussion of the results by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator.

54. Students who choose to repeat a level without taking the final examination or an alternative form of assessment will be subject to the payment of an incomplete attendance fee.

55. Students who pass a level but choose to repeat it should inform their teacher or the appropriate coordinator accordingly at the end of the course period. Exceptions are granted for re-enrolment at the same level in the subsequent term only. Students will not be asked to take the final examination again and will be able to join the next level the following term without paying an incomplete attendance fee, unless the attendance requirement for the repeated course has not been met.

#### *Special courses*

56. The passing status of students registered in specialized courses is based on the level of attendance during the term and on evaluation criteria provided by the teacher at the beginning of the course.

#### **Language proficiency examination**

57. The United Nations language proficiency examination, administered by the Examination and Tests Section, is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the highest level of Language and Communications Programme regular courses in a language and by staff members who have achieved proficiency by other means. To find out more about the examination and how to apply to take the exam, students may go to [www.un.org/exam/lpe](http://www.un.org/exam/lpe).

## **VI. Enquiries**

58. For general enquiries and information, students may contact the Language and Communications Programme:

- (a) In person, Monday to Thursday, at:
    - (i) The DC2 Building, room DC2-200, 1.30 to 3.30 p.m.;
    - (ii) 380 Madison (14th floor), room M-14001 A and B, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.;
  - (b) By e-mail, to [languages@un.org](mailto:languages@un.org), especially to update their contact information;
  - (c) By phone to Ms. Maria Catherina David-Dakay, Staff Development Assistant, or Mr. Kenneth Russo, Training Assistant, at 917 367 2623;
  - (d) By fax, to M-14001 A and B, at 212 963 6016.
59. For pedagogical enquiries or to arrange appointments, please contact:
- Arabic Programme Coordinator: Ms. Samia Montasser, 212 963 9506
  - Chinese Language Supervisor: Mr. Yong Ho, 212 963 2481
  - English Programme Coordinator: Ms. Kathryn Good, 212 963 3820
  - French Programme Coordinator: Mr. Jérôme Quentin, 917 367 2693
  - Russian Language Supervisor: Ms. Alla Padalka, 212 963 7063
  - Spanish Programme Coordinator: Mr. Felipe Martín Sarachaga, 212 963 3329
60. For additional enquiries, contact Mr. Emmanuel Soyer, Officer-in-Charge of the Language and Communications Programme, at 212 963 7019.
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