



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

Undergraduate Arabic Flagship Program FAQ October 27, 2015 Webinar

Please Note: The following is an edited version of a transcript of the technical assistance webinar (October 27, 2015) held to address questions related to the Undergraduate Arabic Flagship Program Application Guidelines released by the Institute of International Education (IIE) on October 5, 2015. The questions and answers below have been edited for clarity and brevity and have been reordered by topic. They are based on an unscripted dialogue and may contain small errors in grammar and flow. Additionally, questions received after the webinar have been added to this document.

General Questions:

Q: Is this RFP an extension of the Flagship Program or a replacement/renewal call?

A: We hope to fund one, new Arabic Flagship Program, as a result of this competition. That program will join our four existing Arabic Flagship Programs.

Q: What levels of language instruction should be covered in a Flagship Program?

A: The proposed program should include language instruction from the first year of instruction until the students enter the overseas Capstone year, typically the fourth or fifth year of school.

Q: Can you elaborate on the relationship/cooperation between this proposed Flagship and existing Arabic Flagship Programs?

A: This program will be fully autonomous. However, there is an expectation for some cooperation and collaboration, including participation at the Arabic Directors Meetings and the larger Flagship Directors Meetings, which discusses issues relevant to all programs.

Additionally, we often offer special initiatives that may be open to Arabic teachers in the program, or other initiatives that will offer opportunities for cooperation with colleagues. Another important event involving collaboration amongst Flagships is the Capstone selection committee. When students want to join the Flagship Capstone Program, their applications are submitted to American Councils, who then convenes the Arabic Flagship Directors to review the applications and proficiency scores, and recommend students for Capstone.

Q: What are your criteria for a successful Flagship Program?

A: All of the evaluation criteria can be found in the RFP. Institutions that are submitting proposals should carefully read all of the guidance in the RFP, while taking into account what works best at their institution and with their faculty. The successful proposal will convince reviewers that you have the capacity, expertise, and institutional will to participate in The Language Flagship and bring in the required number of students.

Personnel:

Q: How many faculty are needed for an Arabic Flagship Program?

A: There is no set requirement with regards to number of faculty. Each institution needs to demonstrate that the faculty and instructors proposed can deliver the courses and instruction necessary to consistently move students from beginning to advanced Arabic language proficiency. Applicants may propose support for additional instructors or seed funding for a tenured or tenure-track faculty line in the Flagship application.

Q: Can a faculty member at the assistant professor level be the Director, as long as he or she is making good progress towards tenure?

A: While there is a strong preference for a tenured professor or associate professor to be in the role of Flagship Program Director, a faculty member at the assistant professor level can be proposed as Flagship Program Director. A plan should be presented in the proposal describing how the assistant professor would become tenure-track, or demonstrating that the individual is well on their way towards tenure. An assistant professor can also be proposed for the roles of Flagship co-PI or Academic Director.

Q: What is the role of an Academic Director? Do all programs need one?

A: No, not all programs need one. However, in some cases, the PI of a Flagship Program is not in the Flagship target language. For example, the PI might be a language department chair who teaches a different foreign language, or another appropriate faculty member. Thus, the program needs an Academic Director who is in the target language and heads up the curriculum, academic program structure, etc., for the Flagship Program.

Q: What is the difference between a PI and Director in terms of responsibility?

A: Each institution should define this for itself. PIs are the lead names on awards. In many cases, the Flagship director has been the PI. Positions differ from institution to institution, but whatever structure your institution sets up in terms of roles and responsibilities should be appropriate for your institution and meet the requirements of the RFP.

Q: Our institution has a career track called academic/professional track faculty – these faculty are permanently budgeted and have assistant or associate full ranks. Can this person serve as Program Director?

A: Again, you should look at faculty roles. Someone in the position you described could serve as Co-PI or Academic Director. It is helpful if the Project Director does have tenure and standing at the university, can serve on curriculum committees, as chair of the department, on faculty senate, etc.

We recommend programs bring in the right academic expertise and people who have the senior standing to help with the larger curricular and administrative issues on campus.

Program Structure

Q: My institution is part of a consortium with other area universities. Can we recruit Flagship students from those universities and count them in our projected student participation?

A: Yes, Flagship has funded consortium arrangements. (For example: Flagship funds a consortia effort between Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore in Russian.) The challenge for an institution is to decide and present how a proposed consortium would work. For example:

1. All Flagship students take all of their Flagship classes at your institution, or
2. Lower level courses are taken at a student's home institution and instructors/faculty at each institution work cooperatively to ensure that the students all have the same learning experience so they are ready to articulate into your institution's core Flagship Program, at some agreed upon point in instruction. All the upper range (typically 300 level and above) courses would be taught at the core Flagship institution to prepare students for the Overseas Capstone Program (the Bryn Mawr model).

The decision relies on how closely your institution's team feels they can work with peer instructors and students at the other institutions.

Q: Would you consider an ROTC proposal?

A: Yes. The criteria in the RFP are the same for everyone, so it is not necessary for the proposal to be exclusively ROTC. However, we would welcome a proposal that offers the program primarily as an ROTC program.

Q: Can you say something about the homestay component of the Capstone Program and do we need to include it in our proposal?

A: You don't need to address any of the overseas components -- that is managed by American Councils for International Education (AC). You're not responsible for the homestay component. What you would need to explain is how you would keep communication open with AC and the other Arabic programs, so your students can transition into overseas program.

Q: Can you give us some examples of model listening/speaking activities that successful programs engage in?

A: The learner-centered classroom model has the instructor speaking less, and the students speaking increasingly, in sentence and paragraph length, in the target language. In listening, we encourage incorporation of authentic materials from the beginning. We also sponsor some teacher training workshops that Flagship instructors can attend so they can get a more concrete understanding of effective methods.

It's not just the quality of the classroom environment; part of the Flagship approach incorporates the additional interventions done on-campus, such as individualized tutoring and group work.

We have 4 very successful Arabic Flagship institutions that could help provide examples of what they do.

Q: How desirable is integrating culture into the program?

A: This is a major focus for us. Culture is expected to be integrated in every level in the program.

Q: Do you expect additional workload hours for students currently enrolled in a language program? Is there a limit that is acceptable by the university?

A: Generally, we have worked with institutions to increase the number of course/credit hours for introductory or intermediate language courses. Three to four hours of instruction is unlikely to meet Flagship needs for introductory or intermediate Arabic. Normally we like to see 5-6 course/credit hours for introductory and intermediate courses, but that alone isn't the key number. We also include tutoring, conversation partners, and other ways of maximizing the hours. We recommend maximizing contact hours.

Capstone

Q: Is it typical in other Arabic Flagship Programs for 5th year students to do Capstone, and how does this affect financial aid?

A: Yes, it is typical. We hope that some students can complete the program in 4 years. Financial aid is something that needs to be dealt with on an institutional basis. There is some student support offered by Flagship but it will typically not cover all expenses.

Advising students early on, so they can complete the program academically and financially, is very important. We know that this is a challenge; the Capstone component is a very important. It is important to make sure that you include a plan on advising these students, especially students from non-traditional majors, in your proposal.

Students have been successful in getting other scholarships, including Gilman, Boren, ROTC, and others. We very strongly encourage students interested in government service to apply for Boren Flagship.

Q: Are there plans for the overseas Capstone program to return to Egypt?

A: Not at this time, but we maintain our relationship with Alexandria University. Currently, we have an excellent program in Morocco.

Q: What testing is associated with the student application to the overseas Capstone program?

A: As part of the application process with American Councils, Capstone applicants take an OPI and the Flagship online listening and reading tests.

Dialects

Q: Has Flagship considered the valorization of dialects in distinct learning settings, as opposed to the integrated Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), as a way of improving Arabic language acquisition?

A: What we have found in terms of developing professional level ILR 3 proficiency, across all 4 modalities in Arabic, is that appropriate integration of dialect with MSA and the knowledge of when to use each register, from the beginning stages through later stages, has been getting very good results for this program. Our program overseas is oriented this way, and we integrate two dialects there.

We have found that learner-centered teaching, encouraging speaking at the sentence and paragraph level, using appropriate formal and informal registers is working effectively. Eighty percent of students completing the Arabic Flagship are being certified at IRL 3. It is a successful model.

Post-program OPIs in Arabic are not only done in MSA or in Moroccan. For spoken Arabic, NSEP has partnered with ACTFL in modifying the OPI rating and delivery systems to incorporate the appropriate dialect. Full credit is given to students who speak in dialect in the correct setting and context.

Q: Are there plans to diversify locations to other parts of the Middle East to incorporate Levantine dialect?

A: There are no current plans to move the Arabic Overseas Capstone program to areas where Levantine is spoken. Teaching Arabic in such a way that students understand dialects and the relationship between them from the beginning form a strong basis to learn additional dialects. It is possible to offer a domestic course that offers the Levantine dialect if needed, outside of the Flagship program.

Q: Is there a policy regarding when Arabic dialects should be introduced in the program?

A: Introducing dialects from the earlier levels has been highly effective for us.

Funding and Budget:

Q: We've heard that to be competitive, overhead costs should be in the 8% range. Is that true?

A: Several current domestic Flagship Programs made their proposals more competitive by reducing their indirect cost rate to the "education training" rate of 8%. That said, this is in no way a requirement, and,

unlike the Department of Education, Flagship funding through DoD is not subject to the education and training rate. Institutions can charge their existing negotiated indirect cost rate for the Flagship grants.

We expect the institution to demonstrate financial commitment to the Flagship Program. This can come in the form of reduced IDC or other forms of support (student scholarships, faculty or instructor lines, etc.). Re-investing a portion of IDC into the Flagship Program is an acceptable way to show institutional support.

Q: My administration was curious if there will be a call for proposals like this in the coming years as well?

A: We don't have a specific plan to offer an Arabic RFP next year. We strongly recommend that you apply this year.

Q: What are fringe benefits?

A: Fringe includes additional costs to someone's salary, such as paid time off, health insurance, etc. The Office of Sponsored Programs at your institution should know the correct rates to include for fringe and indirect costs.

Flagship Student Data

Q: Do you have data on the students' placement after the program?

A: It is extremely early in the program and we have not yet conducted a formal study. The undergraduate program model started small in 2007, and has since grown. Many of our graduates are just starting out or in Master's programs.

We would like to do a survey of Flagship Program graduates in the near future, similar to the recent study on Boren Scholars and Fellows. We found that many Boren recipients are working in government agencies (beyond their one-year commitment). That study is available at the www.nsep.gov site under Reports.

Q: What is the ratio of students dropping out before completion?

A: An increasing percentage of students who register as Flagship Undergraduates are getting to the advanced level and completing the program. Those students who are in Flagship classes but then choose not to apply to complete the program - it is hard to keep a count of these students, because we do not track their progress.

Q: What is the total number of Flagship students since The Language Flagship started?

A: There are currently about 990 students registered in our student database. In addition to that, there are about 1500 who are taking Flagship courses but not registered in the database, so close to 2500

students currently. Yearly enrollment figures can be found in the NSEP annual reports available under Reports at www.NSEP.gov.

Q: Have you conducted surveys that measure the extent to which students are successful in writing, as well as speaking?

We have an ILR scaled writing test that we administer before and after the Capstone program. For writing scores, not all students are able to reach an ILR level 3 yet, but we want students to have advanced writing skills in order to be able to complete academic work in overseas university courses. In the past we have offered Flagship certification to every student who has scored ILR 3 in speaking. We are now changing this requirement; students must now achieve ILR 3 in two modalities and at least ILR 2+ in the others (in other words 3, 3, 2+2+) in order to receive Flagship certification. This is a very high standard to meet. The writing results for the 2014-2015 Arabic Capstone students are as follows:

