

The University “Foreign Language Requirement”, Music Classes and How They Work Together:

Many high level colleges and universities in the United States have some form of a Foreign Language requirement for admission. However, sometimes there is a misperception that students in music classes will have a difficult time meeting this requirement. Below is some information related to this.

The requirement for the University of California system regarding Foreign Language is as follows. This is essentially the same for all universities with a language requirement including private schools:

Two years (three years recommended) of the same language other than English. Courses should emphasize speaking and understanding, and include instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading, composition and culture. American Sign Language and classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, are acceptable.

There are many ways that this requirement can be met.

- It is very possible to take 3 years of language classes in **high school** and still take band or orchestra from 7th through 12th grade. Hundreds of students at Mission San Jose High School do this each year! “Band” students are allowed an extra elective class in 9th-12th grade at MSJHS due to the way the marching program is structured to meet P.E. requirements. “Orchestra” students have to adjust their schedule slightly in 10th grade, but are still easily able to complete 3 years of language classes in grades 10-12. (*Please see the sample schedule pages for BAND and ORCHESTRA in the packet.*)
- Students who are considered “bilingual” may not have to take language classes at all (or may take fewer of them). These students can often “test out” of the requirement using an AP Test or an SAT Subject Test. See the attached information from UC Berkeley for more details on this. There are similar systems in place for most universities.
- Some students can meet the language requirement by taking classes outside of school for High School Credit. **There is a list of FUSD approved schools on page 15 of this packet.**
- There may be other options available as well such as classes at a Community College, other outside classes leading to one of the above tests, etc.

There are a couple of myths regarding the Foreign Language requirement and classes that are **absolutely not true** listed below:

1. **“Taking extra years of language classes will help a student get into a more prestigious university.”** - In reality, this only really helps if a student is planning to “major” in a foreign language. Extra music classes (band or orchestra) in **high school** are much more helpful in this regard according to University Admission Officers. SEE THE LIST OF UNIVERSITIES THAT HOPKINS MUSIC STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED TO ON PAGE 4 OF THIS PACKET!
2. **“Students need to take language classes in Junior High in order to have enough ‘High School Credits’ to apply to a more prestigious university.”** - Some parents/students are told that they have to have a certain number of High School Credits (classes completed) to apply to certain high-end universities. Often this number is unattainable at MSJHS because students are limited to six classes per semester. Universities know this, and base their admissions on the classes that were taken. As long as a student has taken 4 years of English, math, science, etc., the three years of language, and met all other requirements, they should have an acceptable number of High School Credits. **Junior High classes DO NOT count as “high school credits”, regardless of the class!** (*Many other high schools in California and the U.S. offer seven classes per semester or more for students. This is why the “average” number of high school credits for students accepted into universities is higher than the MSJHS average. However, many MSJHS students are accepted to these universities each year, including many “music students”.*)
3. **“Music students cannot take AP language classes at MSJHS.”** – Generally the AP language class is offered the 4th year of a language study, which is easily taken by music students. However, students in most language classes have the option of registering for “College Credit” through Ohlone College for the 3rd & 4th year of their language class if taking language classes through MSJHS. This would be similar to the college credit given for taking the AP test.

All music students at Hopkins/MSJHS eventually have to meet the foreign language requirement in some way. It is always possible to make one of these options work to meet this requirement and still participate in the Hopkins/MSJHS Music Program!