

Common Curriculum Second Language Requirement Substitution Accommodation Guidelines
Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS)
Southern Methodist University

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SMU undergraduate students are required to attain intermediate competence in a second language. The Undergraduate Catalog describes the Second Language requirement (SLR) in detail.

Students with disabilities are not excused or waived from course prerequisites, GPA requirements, or degree requirements. However, in some limited circumstances, when all other means of accommodation have been deemed inappropriate and/or exhausted, a course substitution may be appropriate.

DASS considers course substitutions on a case-by-case basis and only after the student makes a specific request for this accommodation and submits the required documentation. Course substitutions are made only when the student's disability makes the completion of the requirement impossible and that the course requested for substitution is not an essential component of the academic program, allowing the substitution to avoid altering the integrity of the academic program.

Once admitted to SMU, students with a disability that significantly impairs the ability to acquire a second language may apply for a second language substitution. The decision to grant a substitution is based on an individual's learning history, documentation of a disability that substantially impairs second language acquisition, and future educational goals. If DASS approves the second language substitution, determining which courses may serve as substitutes for the second language requirement will be made in consultation with the Office of General Education and the student's academic advisor.

A second language substitution is not an option if a second language is deemed essential to a program or course of study. Also, a second language substitution is not an option if it is a prerequisite for a required class (if that required class determines that second language is an essential element of the class).

To establish eligibility for a second language substitution based on a disability, students are required to review these Guidelines carefully and fill out the Application Form, including all supporting materials and return to the Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies office.

FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR A SECOND LANGUAGE SUBSTITUTION:

1. The student must have a current diagnosis of a disability and have submitted current documentation to DASS that meets criteria outlined in our [Guidelines for Documentation](#).
2. Previous history of difficulty in a second language in high school or college. A thorough case history outlining problems encountered learning a second language from high school or earlier until the present time is required. The case history should include grades and letters from high school language teachers attesting the student's diligence in attempting to learn the second language. Transcripts or a letter from the high school indicating this history must be submitted for verification. If a waiver or substitution was previously granted, please include details surrounding the basis for this accommodation.
3. The student must have a documented disability that significantly impairs the specific ability to learn a second language.
4. The student should submit a complete file request with required documents **at least 18 months prior to the anticipated graduation date** (i.e., January 31, 2025, for a student graduating in May, 2026). Requests made after this time are unlikely to provide enough time for evaluating and implementing the accommodation. SMU students must have enrolled in at least one course toward fulfilling the Second Language requirement by the fall term of their Junior year as stated in the Course Catalog.

TO APPLY FOR A SECOND LANGUAGE SUBSTITUTION

1. All students requesting any accommodations from DASS should first [Request Services](#).
2. Complete the [Application for a Second Language Substitution](#).
3. Submit current psychoeducational or neuropsychological testing documenting a learning disability or other qualifying condition to the DASS office. If this documentation is already on file with our office, you do NOT need to submit a second copy.
4. Submit additional documentation of previous history of second language experiences in high school and/or college, including:
 - Transcripts; instructor comments
 - Previous waiver/substitutions with a verification letter from school
 - Descriptions of the level of support used with second language classes (tutors, outside assistance, etc.)
 - Scores from SMU Second Language Placement Exam
5. If requested by DASS, students may need to strengthen their request by submitting test scores and interpretations from additional assessments related to phonological processing and/or language acquisition.

DECISION PROCESS:

Once complete, each file will be reviewed by DASS. Prior to finalizing decisions, the review team may invite students for an interview (by phone or in person) to discuss their request. The review for this accommodation requires more than the typical two to three weeks. For incoming students, this accommodation most likely will not be finalized before academic advising sessions conclude.

Students will be notified by email from DASS as to the review's outcome. Students approved for the substitution must complete an intake appointment to finalize the accommodation. If approved for a second language substitution, students will also confer with their academic advisor and other appropriate campus personnel to determine how the accommodation may be implemented in their degree plan. Students are responsible for notifying the Office of General Education upon completion of substituted courses and monitoring their Degree Progress Report (DPR) to verify proficiencies have been satisfied. DASS is not involved in steps beyond reviewing, approving, or denying the accommodation request.

Based on the submitted documentation, DASS reserves the right to determine eligibility for a second language substitution. If the substitution request is denied, and a student subsequently provides additional relevant documentation, the course substitution request and alternative accommodations may be reconsidered. All documentation is confidential.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

The initiation of this process, prior history of a learning disability, and/or difficulty in second language are not guarantees that this request will be approved. **It is recommended that students not delay in enrolling in a second language under the assumption that they will be allowed a substitution. Likewise, students should not drop any current enrollments in second language courses until they complete the process at DASS. Students who delay completing this process risk being unable to graduate on time.** For an accommodation that must be in place for a particular semester, students are encouraged to submit all materials at least eight weeks before the start of that semester. We strongly encourage students to complete this process as soon as possible.