

Partner Language Training Center Europe (PLTCE)
Online-Student Information Handbook

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW: PLTCE is the theater proponent for language training. PLTCE had its humble beginnings as a 4-week accelerated Russian review course in the summer of 1978. Today, PLTCE incorporates 5-week Language Enhancement Course (LEC) in MSA, Levantine, Moroccan, French, Persian-Farsi, Russian, Ukrainian; Specialized Language Programs (SLP), NATO Standardization and English as a Foreign Language course (ESL).

MISSION: The primary mission of the LEC program is to provide advanced language training to US military service members, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, as well as NATO allies and partners. PLTCE also provides support to individual command language programs.

SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING: Following the March 2020 implementation of worldwide travel restrictions to help prevent the spread of COVID19, PLTCE responded by adapting its high-quality Language Enhancement Courses (LEC) in MSA, French, Persian-Farsi, and Russian to an online format.

LOCATION: The Marshall Center is located in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Munich lies approximately 70 kilometer/42 miles to the north, and the Austrian Border is 15 kilometers/9 miles to the South.

TIME ZONE: Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany is Central European Time, which is GMT/UTC + 2 hours during Daylight Saving Time and GMT/UTC + 1 hour during Standard Time. Daylight saving time is observed from the last Sunday in March (02:00 CET) to the last Sunday in October (03:00 CEST). You can check the current time in Germany at <https://time.is/Germany>

PART II. ACADEMICS

GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS: It is important for you to realize that your primary mission while enrolled in a PLTCE course is to improve your language/language-teaching/language-testing skills to the maximum extent possible.

The teaching-learning relationship is a cooperative one in which both the teacher and the students are engaged in a common effort to establish an optimal program of instruction. You are expected to take full advantage of this unique learning opportunity and to cooperate with your instructors in establishing and monitoring your own course of study.

ACADEMIC POLICY: Students will receive assignments to be completed as requested by the instructor. Repeated failure to participate, prepare, or complete assignments will result in the student being dropped from the class. Do not be late for virtual meetings. Avoid heated political topics. Academic issues need to be brought immediately to the attention of the Department Chair or 1SG.

CLASS SCHEDULE: The academic days for online LEC students will vary according to their individual geographic location. Classes run from Monday through Friday. US national holidays and any days announced by PLTCE administration are days off. Classes will still be in session on otherwise-designated Training Holidays.

PLACEMENT TEST AND DLPT: Depending on your language, you will receive a diagnostic assessment early in the course. At the end of the course, you should coordinate with your CLPM for the next available Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) session. The DLPT evaluates your proficiency in reading and in listening comprehension and is also useful in assessing PLTCE instruction.

PART III. ONLINE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

COMMUNICATION: PLTCE students must interact daily with the instructor, other course participants, and course content by being responsive to emails, announcements, discussions, virtual meetings, and assignments. Students are expected to log-on to the learning management system (LMS), Google Classroom, on a daily basis and in accordance with course requirements to check for news and information, and to maximize their online participation. PLTCE personnel will be notified when students do not demonstrate attendance by accessing course functions and do not submit required assignments.

DILIGENCE: PLTCE expects that online students will generally spend a similar amount of time to complete an online course as they would to complete the same course offered in residence (about eight hours per day). As workday overlaps allow, instructors and students will schedule video meeting to complement non-concurrent assignments, to hold discussions, and to ask questions. Students are expected, to the greatest extent possible, to participate in video meeting. We are asking for a minimum of 4 hours of video attendance each week of class. Time management is critical to the success of online training.

UNDERSTANDING: Although there are many benefits to be realized from virtual instruction, online classes require much more flexibility and patience as instructors and learners adjust to new learning management systems, lesson formats, and interaction patterns. Possible concerns are: more difficulties/glitches with technology; challenges keeping focused and motivated; various time zones of instructors and students and compensating for a lack of non-verbal responses (nodding, confused looks, etc.).

NETIQUETTE: Working online, it is easy to downplay the human-interaction element. Students must keep up their military professionalism by being kind, respectful, and helpful. You should also present yourself and your “learning space” responsibly and with dignity – no T-shirts with offensive messages, unmade beds, etc. Bear in mind, also, that this is serious training, not social networking, so overuse of caps, emoticons, etc. is inappropriate.

PART IV. ONLINE RESOURCES

COMPUTERS AND INTERNET ACCESS: Course participants must have access to the minimum required course components, technologies, tools, and media. PLTCE expects online students to resolve their own technology issues related to computers, related equipment, and internet access. PLTCE cannot assist with troubleshooting issues that students might have with their personal equipment or purchased services.

- Students should have a reliable stand-alone or laptop computer with adequate processing speed and data storage to accommodate the many files to be exchanged during the course.
- Students should have a reliable, high-speed internet connection, preferably with at least 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload capability. Since instructors and students will share lots of files, ISP data caps could limit participation.
- Students will need a Google account, which is established with the creation of a Gmail account. Before the LEC course date, PLTCE will provide students with Google Classroom joining instructions. Students do not need to create anything within Google Classroom to participate.
- Students will be given access to BBB (BigBlueButton) virtual meeting rooms, by means of a link to a specific classroom by their instructor. Some instructors may create a pin that goes along with the link for additional security, but not necessarily. Student do not need to create an account with BBB to participate in the virtual meetings the link will directly connect them to the instructors room.

PROGRAM AND APP TRAINING: Students may search Google/YouTube for tutorials on the various programs and apps used by PLTCE for online instruction, including Google Classroom, Calendar, and Drive. Likewise, you can find BigBlueButton tutorials. Many of these tutorials are even in your target languages, which might help you keep up with class administration discussions in French, Farsi, Arabic, or Russian.

In the current learning environment, there are countless tutorials for Google Classroom to be found, including:

[Google Classroom pdf](#)

[Google Classroom video](#)

You can find a BBB tutorial at:

[BBB video](#)

VIDEO CONFERENCE TROUBLE SHOOTING:

1. If you are having trouble with audio or videos, click on the phone button, to exit and then rejoin the conversation and see if that helps. This does not kick you out of the classroom; it just restarts your connection, often cleaning up any issues.
2. If you have a bad echo during a video conference, this usually happened because the audio is retransmitting by an open mic on one end. This can be remedied by having everyone muting his or her mic while not talking removing the chance to retransmit the audio. Additionally, if everyone uses a head set or headphones with a mic to limit the background noise this will minimize the distracted echo.
3. When you are connected but the images are distorted or the audio is chopped up, is often is caused by limited bandwidth during peak times. The best way to work around this is to turn off the video and just communicate with voice. The side conversation bar, the instructors white board and any links or presentations are still broadcasts. This also might only need to be done by one or two individuals based on their internet connection.
4. It is good to know that there is a slight delay when clicking the mute and unmute button in BBB, so learn to be comfortable with a little bit of dead air but it's also very helpful to watch the participates icons on the left side to see who is muted or not, or using the hand raised symbol. Those wanting to speak will unmute their mic a little early to open the connection or "raise their hand" to allow the teacher to call on them.

PART V. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

DIRECTOR/1SG OPEN-DOOR POLICY: Although virtual, the PLTCE Director and 1SG maintain an open-door policy at all times.

STUDENT NOTICES: Students should regularly check the Google Classroom announcements, Gmail email and PLTCE website (pltce.org) for general information, alerts and student notifications.

ONLINE CONDUCT: PLTCE is a military school and as such military professionalism and discipline will be maintained and enforced. The 1SG is the military authority for the school. Violations of the SOP, PLTCE policy and guidance may result in removal from class.

Teachers are contracted instructors and are responsible for instruction. Net discipline for each class is a matter of personal and professional integrity but is ultimately enforced by the PLTCE 1SG. The 1SG, Department Chair, and the Director are the only people authorized to make changes or exceptions. Contact information is below.

STUDENT ABSENCE: Students must request an absence from class **BEFOREHAND** by coordinating with the 1SG.

GRADUATION: Instructors will hold informal Graduation ceremonies at the end of the five weeks of training. PLTCE staff will email Certificates of Training to all participating students; however, PLTCE will send Certificates of Graduation only to those students who specifically make such a request and complete all course requirements.

PART VI. STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

The following is a list of PLTCE/LEC POC's.

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Registrar – Mr. Braulio Mercader - DSN 314-440-3641, COM 49-08821-750-3641, email PLTCE@marshallcenter.org