

The School of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
School Foreign Language Examination Guidelines
(Sections relevant for students)

I. GENERAL NORMS

- I.1. The purpose of the language examinations is to test the student's reading knowledge of foreign languages, knowledge of which is indispensable for sound scholarship. The level of mastery should be such as to enable the student to read primary and secondary sources in a given language, particularly—although not exclusively—in view of his or her thesis or dissertation.
- I.2. Candidates for the M.A. and Ph.L. degree must pass one such examination either in Greek, Latin, French, or German.
- I.3. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must pass both the French and German examinations. Demonstrated competence in some foreign language other than French or German will not substitute for this requirement.
- I.4. If the candidate for the M.A. or Ph.L. degree intends to fulfill the School language requirement in French or German, he or she must first fulfill the University language requirement. The student may fulfill the University requirement either by enrolling in and successfully completing the University's French or German 500 course, or by passing the Graduate School Foreign Language Test administered by the Counseling Center. The University language requirement must be fulfilled in the same language in which the School language requirement is fulfilled.
- I.5. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must fulfill the University language requirements in both French and German, and the School requirement for either of these languages may not be fulfilled before the University requirement for that language is fulfilled.
- I.6. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must fulfill all language requirements one year prior to the time of the presentation of the candidate's degree.
- I.7. M.A. or Ph.L. candidates can take the exam a maximum number of three times if the student never passes even one half of the exam. In other words, if a person has not achieved an "M.A./Ph.L. pass" by the third attempt, he or she does not meet the language requirements. Ph.D. candidates who achieve an "M.A./Ph.L. pass" at the first, second, or third attempt can take a maximum number of four exams. Students who have signed up for an exam may withdraw without consequence at any time prior to it. If the student arrives at the place of the examination, looks at the exam, and then leaves without completing it, this will count as a failed attempt. Proctors are responsible for informing the Administrative Assistant that the student has left.

III. CHOICE OF THE TEXT SELECTIONS

III.1. The texts may well be chosen from the following sources:

- Greek: Plato, Aristotle, and other suitable authors,
- Latin: Aquinas and another author,
- French: one primary and one secondary source,
- German: one primary and one secondary source.

III.2. Texts for each of the morning and the afternoon examinations should be selected with a view to their length (about one page long), difficulty, and content. Authors of the texts should not visibly be identifiable on the examination.

III.3. In exercising his or her responsibility for text selections, the Coordinator should have at least one additional person on the Committee review any text proposed with an eye to its suitability.

III.4. Ancient spelling (renaissance Latin printing, French pre-19th-century spelling, German pre-20th-century spelling) is to be avoided. German Fraktur should be avoided as well.

IV. ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATIONS

IV.1. Graduate students and eligible undergraduate seniors (such as Basselin fellows) enrolled in the School of Philosophy, including students registered *in absentia*, are eligible to take any of foreign language examinations offered by the school. Students who have taken a leave of absence from the School are not so eligible.

IV.2. Prior to the admission to the French or German examinations of the School of Philosophy, the students must have successfully completed the University's French or German 500 course or passed the Graduate School Foreign Language Test administered by the Counseling Center (cf. I.4. and I.5.).

V. ADMINISTERING THE EXAMINATIONS

V.1. The foreign language examinations will be offered three times per year, once in the spring semester, once in the summer, and once in the fall. Typically, examination dates are chosen in the months of March/April, July, and October/November. Examinations in all of the languages examined by the School will be set for every examination date.

V.2. The examination will take place in two sessions, both occurring on the same day. There will be a three-hour morning session and a three-hour afternoon session.

V.3. The use of only one dictionary is allowed, of the student's choice. No electronic dictionaries are allowed.

V.4. Only those grammar aids are allowed that may be included in the dictionary the student decides to use.

VI. GRADING THE EXAMINATIONS

VI.3. Possible grades are:

- “pass plus”: good understanding of the passage rendered in clear English;
- “pass minus”: adequate understanding of the passage, but with some flaws or faults;
- “fail plus”: inadequate understanding of the passage, though parts are correctly rendered;
- “fail minus”: gibberish.

VI.4. Two passing grades by the two Graders or two failing grades on the same passage receive a corresponding final grade.

VI.5. Students receiving one passing and one failing grade on the same passage will have their work graded a third time, and the third grade will determine the final grade.

VI.6. The particulars of a student’s grade should be made available to the student upon request. The Dean’s office will keep the student’s blue-books, however, photocopies of the blue-books may be obtained by the student.

VII. PASSING AND FAILING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

VII.1. All students must take the entire examination, both the morning and the afternoon session.

VII.2. For terminal M.A. or Ph.L. students, a passing grade for either the morning or the afternoon portion of the examination suffices for passing the language examination as a whole.

VII.3. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must receive a final passing grade for both the morning and the afternoon session.

VII.4. M.A. or Ph.L. students who intend to seek admission to the Ph.D. program, and terminal M.A. or Ph.L. students who prove not to be “terminal,” must satisfy the requirements set forth in VII.3.

VII.5. The student’s record will show this distinction as follows. If the student passes both the morning and the afternoon examinations, this pass is to appear in the record as a “Ph.D. pass.” If the student passes only one of the two sessions of an examination, this is to appear as a “M.A./Ph.L. pass.”

Approved by the Faculty of the School of Philosophy: January 13, 2004

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