

School of Philosophy
The Catholic University of America
School Foreign Language Examination Guidelines

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 (Greek or Latin) or secondary sources (French or German) in those languages, 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.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. Students are normally allowed up to three attempts at the School of Philosophy examination in a given language. 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.

II. DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS

- II.1. The Foreign Language Committee has principal responsibility for administering, grading, and general oversight of the language examinations.
- The Foreign Language Committee consists of the Chair, one Coordinator for each language, and two Graders for each language, appointed by the Dean.
 - An Administrative Assistant of the School of Philosophy assists the committee in its tasks.
- II.2. The duties of the Chair are:
- Three to four weeks prior to the examination, to request in writing, from each of the four Coordinators, two text selections for each language.
 - To review each text for suitability.
 - One week prior to the examination, to deliver all proposed texts to the Administrative Assistant for final approval by the Dean.

- To determine a deadline for the grading of the exams, and, after the examination has taken place, to distribute exams to the several Coordinators. The Chair should keep a record, by student number, of the exams distributed to each Coordinator. The Chair may wish to remind each Coordinator of the identities of the other members of his or her subcommittee.
- Within four weeks of the examination date, to collect from the Coordinators the grades for each exam, to tabulate the grades, and to communicate them to the Dean. The Chair will also submit copies of each foreign-language examination administered on a given date to the office of the Dean, for the files.
- With the Dean's approval, to communicate the official results to the entire Faculty, at the next regular meeting of the Faculty after grading is completed. The Chair's report to the Faculty will consist of the number of students having taken and passed or failed each examination.
- In consultation with the Dean and other members of the Committee, to resolve any disputes that may arise, as appropriate.

II.3. The duties of the Coordinators are:

- To select two text passages for the examination in the appropriate language and to convey them to the Chair (cf. II.2. and III.).
- To oversee the grading of the examinations, and to ensure that they are graded in a timely fashion.
- To calculate the grade and, in the event of a notable discrepancy between the grades assigned by the first two Graders (i. e. a passing grade from one Grader and a failing grade from the other, on the same portion of the exam), to serve as a third Grader. Alternatively, the Coordinator is at liberty to serve as one of the original Graders, leaving it to one of the other members of the sub-committee to adjudicate differences between Graders.
- To communicate the results to the Chair, within about three weeks of the examination date.

II.4. The duties of the Graders are:

- To assist the Coordinator in selecting the texts (cf. III.3.).
- To grade the examinations. Graders should be allowed roughly a week for each set of exams they are to grade.
- After the second round of grading, to convey the graded exams to the Coordinator, roughly two weeks after the examination date.

II.5. The duties of the Administrative Assistant are:

- To propose possible dates to the Dean, avoiding conflicts with
 - other graduate examinations (e.g., the Reading Lists),
 - undergraduate Comprehensive Examinations,
 - important holidays,
 - and, wherever possible, lectures and other University events.

- To secure approval of a proposed date from the Dean in consultation with the Chair.
- To inform students about these dates before the semester begins.
- To arrange for students to sign up for the exams.
- To make available to students, upon request, copies of past examinations, general information about the examinations, and any other study aides approved by the Faculty (e.g., “The Fine Art of Taking the French Exam”).
- To retain copies of past examinations. Copies of those exams that have not actually been given and that can be reused (cf. III.5.) shall be marked as such,, in order to avoid accidental disclosure to the students.
- To secure an adequate room for the examination, and to make known the location to the students.
- To find proctors and to inform them about the procedures.
- To communicate basic information to students who have signed up, including names of Committee members, dictionary rules, and expected time for grading.
- To assign identification numbers to the students and to prepare exam packets.
- To remove from exam booklets any information that might identify the student who had taken the examination, keep an accurate list of the names of those who signed up and sat for an examination, and otherwise to assist the Chair in ensuring that the exams be graded in an efficient and orderly manner.
- To inform the Chair whether the grading procedure should be hastened for particular students, as for example in the case of those who must have successfully completed the examination before undertaking the M.A. oral examination.
- Within roughly five weeks of the examination date, to communicate to students the grade he or she has earned, and to ensure all relevant grades have been entered into the students’ records.

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: 20th or 21st c. secondary scholarship,
 - German: 20th or 21st c. secondary scholarship.
- 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 their suitability (cf. II.3. and II.4.).
- 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.

III.5. If no student takes the examination set for any given language in any given semester, the same text selection can be used again for a subsequent examination.

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 who are on Leave of Absence, 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.

V. ADMINISTERING THE EXAMINATIONS

V.1. The foreign language examinations will be offered twice per year, once in the spring semester and once in the fall. Typically, examination dates are chosen in the months of March/April, 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 one bilingual 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.1. Each of the morning and afternoon portions of the examination are to be graded at least twice. The Graders should not know the results of each other's grading. The grade reports for each set of blue-books are to be given directly to the Coordinator, and not passed on from one Grader to the next.

VI.2. In order to guard against the possibility of misplaced exams, they should be delivered directly either to the appropriate person or to his or her office (an administrative assistant can assist you in placing the exams in the appropriate office). Campus mail, and the mail boxes in 100 Aquinas Hall, are to be avoided.

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 (cf. II.3.), 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 Chair will keep the student's blue-books, however, photocopies of the blue-books may be obtained by the student.

VII. PASSING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

- VII.1. 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.2. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must receive a final passing grade for both the morning and the afternoon session.
- VII.3. 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.2.
- VII.4. 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

Revised January 19, 2016